

ENTHROMENT OF DEMOCRACY A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE 2011 NIGERIA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND 2008 UNITED STATES OF AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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Abstract.

This study comparatively examines the Nigerian presidential elections of 2007 and 2011 alongside the United States presidential election of 2008 with emphasis on electoral processes, democratic practices, institutional performance, and political party systems. The study observes that while the United States operates a transparent and ideology-driven electoral system supported by strong democratic institutions and credible transition processes, Nigeria's electoral process has been characterized by electoral violence, rigging, political manipulation, weak institutions, ethnic sentiments, and lack of ideological distinction among political parties. The paper identifies important lessons from the 2008 U.S. election for Nigeria, including the need for transparent electoral processes, free and fair elections, credible leadership selection, and smooth transfer of power. It further notes that the 2011 Nigerian elections recorded significant improvements compared to the widely criticized 2007 elections, particularly in voter registration, result collation, and institutional independence. The study concludes that democratic consolidation in Nigeria depends on electoral reforms, institutional strengthening, political accountability, and adherence to democratic principles capable of ensuring credible elections and sustainable national development.

Keywords: *Comparative analysis, Electoral process, Democracy, Presidential election, Nigeria, United States, Electoral reform, Political parties, Free and fair election, Democratic consolidation.*

INTRODUCTION

The study compares Comparative analysis as a concept is a powerful versatile tool (Lijphart, 1971; Landman, 2020). It enhances our ability and to describe understand concepts and reference points from a broader perspective (Sartori, 1991; Peters, 2022). The comparative approach also stimulates us to form general theories of political relationships (Almond and Powell, 1966; Caramani, 2020). It encourages and enables us to test our political theories by confronting them with the experience of many institutions and settings (Apter, 1996; Mahoney and Thelen, 2021). Elections are processes through which government in every democracy come to power (Dahl, 1989; Norris, 2021). Although, election is sole means nor exclusive the nature of the electoral process and the conduct of parties elections in Nigeria (Ake, 1996; Omotola, 2022). It notes that the Nigerian elections fell far short of global democratic standards by way of their conduct and the elections (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2008; Onapajo, 2021). The study equally argues that the U.S. presidential election of 2008 is full of vital lessons of Nigeria democracy since we claim to practice the American style presidential system (Diamond, 2008; Cheeseman, 2021). It identifies various inconsistencies between the two presidential systems in their political and electoral system (Linz, 1990; Elgie, 2021). While the U.S operates two party system (with multiple fringe parties and independent and candidacy with a combination of the collegiate single transferable vote and winner-take-all electoral systems at the primaries and general elections (Key, 1964; Sabato, 2020). Nigeria operates multiparty that is not properly defined) with simple majority - electoral system in all elections (Jinadu, 1997; Suberu, 2022). The study also notes that, while the majority use in the U.S. congress through filibuster there is the majority without the rule (as it is in Nigeria National assembly where tribal and ethnic sentiments hold sway (Binder and Smith, 1997; Ojo, 2021). This paper identifies five important issues of interest from the U.S election of 2008. These are the importance of politics of ideology, the imperative a of transparent process, the benefit of free and fair election, the need

to conduct a smooth transition of power (Obama, 2009; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2023). The study therefore concludes that unless the political class in Nigeria changes its political orientation and implies the tenets, with consistent democratic rule, the electoral process will continue subverted to be to democracy, the set of events and decisions leading to elections have long lasting consequences (Osaghae, 1998; Falola and Heaton, 2022). In Nigeria, the electoral process is usually characterized by undemocratic values and actions even though our leaders claim to be practicing democracy (Joseph, 1991; Agbu, 2021). The Nigeria electoral process like in most developing countries is marred by electoral violence, rigging, assassinations of political opponents, and the manipulation of the electoral process by the ruling class (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Bekoe, 2022).

In sharp contrast, the American presidential election of November 2008 was as exciting as it was full of lessons for Nigeria (Crotty, 2009; Sabato, 2020). After all, the country claims to practice the "American-style" presidential system (Oyediran, 1981; Elaigwu, 2021). Nigeria has lessons to learn from the U.S 2008 presidential election (Diamond, 2008; Cheeseman, 2021). These include:

1. Politics of ideology and issues (Heywood, 2019; Freeden, 2021).
2. The imperative of a transparent process (Norris, 2014; IDEA, 2022).
3. The benefits of free and fair elections (Dahl, 1989; Birch, 2020).
4. Choosing the right person for the job (Burns, 1978; Nye, 2020).
5. The need to conduct a smooth and credible transition of power (Huntington, 1991; Levitsky and Way, 2022).

In terms of ideology, a nation is united by common principles in a constitution (Heywood, 2019; Ginsberg et al., 2021). The method of approach or application will however differ between contending political interest, as political parties are usually formed based on group' perception of the application of these principles for maximum benefits to the citizenry (Duverger, 1954; Ware, 2021). These perceptions form the core principles of parties' ideology (Freeden, 1996; Ball et al., 2021).

In America, the Republican Party subscribes to the conservative application of American principles or narrower interpretation of same, while the democrats go to broader application of the American ideals (Schlesinger, 1992; Pew Research Center, 2022). The Republicans, for instance, believe that America must be ready to go to war at any time (anywhere in the world) to defend her interest (Kagan, 2008; Mearsheimer, 2021). The Democrats, on the other hand maintain that America should be more government spending on domestic issues to cater for the basic needs of the ordinary people etc. (Krugman, 2009; Stiglitz, 2020). This sharp divide is what defines the electoral contest in America (Abramowitz, 2010; Fiorina, 2021).

Conversely, Nigeria political parties have not defined for the voting public the principles that separate them from one another (Omotola, 2009; Onuoha, 2022). They look and behave alike, and the electorate is oftentimes coerced to vote for the ruling party in what is commonly referred to as "belonging to the mainstream" by the political gladiators (Ake, 1996; Adejumobi, 2021). As in other developing countries like Zimbabwe, Kenya and Philippines, the conduct of elections in Nigeria is left to the vagaries of defective systems and weak institutions that sway to the whims and caprices of the ruling elite who use their power and wealth to fan primordial sentiments leading, in most case, to blood-bath of degrees never experienced amongst party supporters and ethnic rivals (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Cheeseman, 2022).

Elections in developing countries often times degenerate to huge conflagration that almost consume an entire country, region, state, or local council area e.g Nigeria, Cote D' Ivoire, Zimbabwe etc. are some few cases that readily come to mind (Collier, 2009; Bekoe, 2022).

This development across continent is a confirmation that each country. regardless of region, offers distinctive historical and cultural contexts that influence its internal democracy contrary to the norm (Huntington, 1991; Hyden, 2021). The legitimacy of a government depends to a very large extent, on the acceptability of the electoral outcomes, linked to the process that brought about that

government to power, by the majority of the population of the country (Lipset, 1959; Norris, 2021). We have to admit that it was the transparency of the American political process that made it possible for Senator Barack Obama to emerge as the President of the United States of America in the election of November 4th 2008 (Obama, 2009; Alexander, 2021). It was indeed the transparent organization and conduct of the elections (both inter and intra party) that made it possible for a black man to be able to occupy the White house in such a dramatic and unprecedented manner (Ifill, 2009; Harris, 2022). A careful observation of Senator Barack Obama's emergency as U.S President will attest to this claim (Remnick, 2010; Alter, 2020).

Before he came into the race, his party, the Democratic Party had already primed Senator Hilary Clinton as its front runner (Clinton, 2014; Balz, 2021). But when came with the eloquent magnetism, with the catch phrase 'yes we can', the electorate began to endorse his candidacy (Obama, 2009; Jamieson, 2020). Obama was able to avoid all conventional bus stops. He refused to tap into the campaign structure of the veteran, Rev. Jesse Jackson who had been in the fray as the presidential hopeful for the blacks (Jackson, 2008; Dyson, 2021). He equally refused to accept government funding and went on a fund raising drive (mainly from commoner's who gave as low as between one and two dollars) grossing the highest funds to be raised by a presidential candidate in the history of United States (Corrado, 2011; OpenSecrets, 2022).

If the process was not transparent, and power belonged to the elite, Obama who was widely seen as an outsider to Washington politics and minority could have been stopped long before the end of the Democratic Party primaries (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2023). But he went through the process and came out victorious (Obama, 2009; Alexander, 2021). On the contrary, the Nigeria political process is till full of imposition and impunity (Joseph, 1991; Agbu, 2021). Power resides in the hands of the leaders not the people, though, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) staged what is referred to as 'open secret balloting' during its party convention/primaries, this did not equate to transparency, in that, they still produced already 'anointed' candidates (Omotola, 2010; Onapajo, 2021).

A transparent process works from the problem to the solution, but Nigerian politicians already have the answers but stage a charade (a public show) to confirm it (Ake, 1996; Adebawwi, 2022).

The 2008 presidential election in America has shown that a transparent process always produces the best man for the job (Dahl, 1989; Norris, 2021). Albeit, the American elections may not be perfect like all human actions are, there is a general understanding that a person who emerges at the end of the election will be the product of voter's choice (Putnam, 1993; Birch, 2020). This is because the condition-precedent, to creating legitimacy and acceptability has been created and institutions streamlined to ensure that this is made humanly possible (North, 1990; Fukuyama, 2022). There are certain unique features that confound this researcher in the US Electoral system (Sabato, 2020; Herrnson, 2021). There are that:

- a. There is no federal electoral body that conducts elections in the United States. The American Federal Electoral Commission's (FEC) main job is to ensure that the electoral rules are applied. Power to conduct elections has been devolved to the states (FEC, 2008; Hasen, 2022).
- b. There is nobody or governmental agency to formally announce the results of the elections in the US (Hasen, 2020; Persily, 2021).
- c. Results are collated and released as they arrive at media centres through electronic transmission (CNN, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2021).

Thus, the Cable News Networks (CNN) and other media houses announce the winner of the 2008 US presidential election after five hours of minute by minute display of the results as they came in from the states (CNN, 2008; Sabato, 2020). The loser immediately conceded defeat as the results became known (McCain, 2008; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2023). The good thing about free and fair election is that it produces acceptability (Dahl, 1989; Norris, 2021). Once the peoples' choice is seen to have been genuinely made, the loser will also find the magnanimity to praise his opponent and call for closing of ranks (Huntington, 1991; IDEA, 2022). The nation will embrace a new era as was

displayed on November 4th when Barrack Obama won and the party in power ensures that its policies and programmes enunciated during the campaigns immediately put in motion for implementation (Obama, 2009; Alter, 2020). The executive-legislative synergy is quite apparent on the formulation and passage of bills as evidenced in the Obama's healthcare reform bill currently before the US Congress (Jacobs and Skocpol, 2010; Hacker, 2021). But having lost a key ally in late Sen Edward Kennedy who died while the debate was still on, President Obama's chances of getting it passed on record time has become slimmer because the party has lost the vital number, 60, required to filibuster or have it passed without recourse to Republican help (Binder, 2014; Lee, 2022). There is total absence of this trend in Nigeria where even though the president's party is in control of the National Assembly, none of his very urgent reform bills submitted nearly a year ago has seen the light of the day (Okoosi-Simbine, 2010; Ojo, 2021). Thus, the electoral reforms promised by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to make for better organization of election in the country had been put on hold as we approached the next round of election (Yar'Adua, 2008; Suberu, 2022). Fortunately, the reforms were concluded to produce an atmosphere that will lead to free and fair elections (INEC, 2011; IDEA, 2022). Because, it is only free and fair elections that will enhance the growth of democracy and put aside the old demons that have made nation building difficult in the past decade (Dahl, 1989; Diamond, 2021). If free and fair election defeated the threat of racism in the American election of 2008, it will certainly help defeat ethnic and sectional threats in Nigeria democracy (Obama, 2009; Cheeseman, 2021).

The US presidential election of 2008 has a lot teach Nigerians and other developing democracies especially in the area of picking the right candidates who have the right disposition for national assignment (Burns, 1978; Nye, 2020). Apart from the two presidential candidates, the choices which they in turn made as running mates also helped to deliver the outcome into the quality of judgment they are likely to make on important issues (Sabato, 2020; Greenstein, 2021).

It was clear that the Republican flag bearer, Senator John McCain made the wrong choice in a young woman, Mrs. Serah Palin, then Governor of Alaska State who the American public felt needed more experience in order to play at the level of a Vice-President (McCain, 2008; Cohen, 2021). Her lack of experience was largely unveiled through the debates where she showed her naivety in her response to questions put to her (Jamieson, 2010; Patterson, 2022).

On the other hand, President Obama defined the kind of material he wanted as his running mate long before he picked Senator Joe Biden. This could be confirmed from his statement before he emerged as the Democratic flag bearer saying:

"I want somebody who has integrity, who is in politics for the right reason. I want somebody who is independent. somebody who is able to tell me you know, Mr President, I think you are wrong, and here's why. I want somebody who is able to Be president, who I trust"

And he found that man in Senator Joe Biden, Chairman of the Senate Committee of Foreign Affairs (Obama, 2009; Greenstein, 2021). Nigeria leaders do not want running mates who are independent and can be President (Joseph, 1991; Agbaje, 2021). They want lapdogs, (yes man) (Ake, 1996; Adebawji, 2022). They think of themselves rather than what is good for Nigeria (Osaghae, 1998; Falola and Heaton, 2022). The military and the PDP leaders picked Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1998 because of their private fears and interests (Diamond, 2004; Suberu, 2022). Obasanjo picked Alhaji Umar Musa Yar' Adua to succeed him as President and paired him with Good luck Jonathan as Vice president because of his private fears and interests (Omotola, 2010; Ojo, 2021).

This feeling was accentuated by the impasse generated by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's medical trip abroad without properly handing over to his vice, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (Kalu, 2011; Campbell, 2020). The ethnic and sectional card was being played out by the political jobbers who had seen nothing wrong in the country being left without a leader for as long as the president stayed abroad, contrary to the spirit of the 1999 constitution, which created the office of Vice President if

the president proceeds on leave (or was to be absent from office for whatever reason) as contained in section 145 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; Nwabueze, 2021).

The process of transition in the American Presidential election is another thing to desire (Huntington, 1991; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2023). Like his predecessors, George W. Bush not only congratulated Obama but the latter also invited Bush at his earliest convenience and took him round his future home (Bush, 2008; Alter, 2020).

There has been only come democratic transaction in Nigeria's history (Elaigwu, 2011; Agbu, 2021). It took place in 2007 when Obasanjo handed over power to his successor Yar'Adua (Omotola, 2010; Falola and Heaton, 2022). It was smooth no doubt, ostensibly because it went the way of Obasanjo (Suberu, 2007; Ojo, 2021). What could have happened if, for instance, the opposition candidate had won? The story probably would have been different (Joseph, 1991; Adebani, 2022). It happened in 1993, when Chief Moshood Abiola won the June 12th Presidential election (Campbell, 2013; Olurode, 2021). The military leadership did not want him to become the president and refused to hand-over power (Diamond, 1995; Osaghae, 2020). The same occurred in Cote D' Ivoire when "Gbagbo" refused to handover but with the intervention of (France) he handed over to the winner (International Crisis Group, 2011; Cheeseman, 2021). In Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi was beaten in the 2005 election. He seized power by force and embarked on brutal repression of opponent (Lyons, 2006; Abbink, 2021). In that light, these countries are seen to have resolved their internal conflicts once elections are organized, with little or no regard to whether or not the expression of the will of the masses is respected in such elections (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Norris, 2021). Thus, free and fair elections have continued to be a mirage in most developing countries where the winners of such elections engaged in wanton abuse of the privileges their leadership conferred unabated in the developing nations, the donor nations and development partners have done little or nothing to compel compliance with the norm, even when they have openly criticized and condemned poorly organized elections (Human Rights Watch, 2007; IDEA, 2022). This has often been 'lip service' without any follow-up by concrete action, particularly in states seen to be of strategic interest to them, such as Nigeria (Ake, 1996; Cheeseman, 2022).

If the two situations described above could glossed over because they occurred under military, what can one say about Mwai Kibaki of Kenya and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe who were beaten by the opposition candidates, Rahila Odinga and Morgan Tsvangirai respectively but they settled for power sharing after engineering bloodbaths in their countries (Lynch, 2008; Raftopoulos, 2021). In contrast, John Kufuor's ruling party's candidate, John Addo was defeated by the opposition party's candidate, Professor John Atta-Mills (Boafo-Arthur, 2008; Gyimah-Boadi, 2021). Atta Mills was sworn in by John Kufuor. Mr Atta-Mills is the current president of Ghana (Whitfield, 2009; Arthur, 2020). The combined effect of a defective electoral process and weak political institutions in developing countries like Nigeria is catastrophic as the development encourages corruption and two also worshipping rather than national cohesion (Joseph, 1991; Hyden, 2021). This much was emphasized when president Obama visited Ghana as his first visit to sub-Saharan Africa and reiterated by his Secretary of State, Mr.s Hilary Clinton when she visited Nigeria later (Obama, 2009; Clinton, 2014). According to Obama "what Africans need are strong constitutions and not powerful leaders" (Obama, 2009; Fukuyama, 2022).

The scenario has made many Africans and external observers remain skeptical about the appropriateness and the ultimate utility of election as an instrument of political change (Monga, 2009; Cheeseman, 2021). Some decry the multi-party elections that have pressures by Western donors that usually fail to produce democracy and often exacerbate tensions in Africa's invariably multi-ethnic, often polarized societies (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Hyden, 2021).

Some scholars are also of the opinion that the rush for democratization of Africa without due regard to its rising forces of ethnic nationalism is misguided and fundamentally faulty. Studies have shown that 'while mature democratizing states are actually prone to both external or international and internal (or civil) violence Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder assert that:

"Rising nationalism often goes hand in hand with rising Democracy this concoction of nationalism and incipient democratization has been (1995:83,85)"

The result being that overzealous elite use elections to whip up ethnic sentiments and cause unnecessary confusion and diversions thereby slowing down the pace of development of democracy in the development countries like Nigeria. The system invariably gives tacit support to this trend as it encourages mediocrity.

It has been observed that the current electoral system in Nigeria creates room for manipulation with impunity as the legal framework is also lacking in effective handling of electoral malpractices thereby making the healing process equally difficult (Ake, 1996; Omotola, 2010; Agbu, 2021).

The 2007 presidential elections have been adjudged the worse so far in the country by the way of their conduct and the judicial processes that followed as reported by the various monitoring groups (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2007; Suberu, 2007; Onapajo, 2021). There were widely reported cases of malpractices and violence (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Bekoe, 2022). Slogans such as "CARRY GIO," "NO SHAKING" "SHARE THE MONEY" "IT IS SETTLED", "IT IS A DO-OR DIE AFFAIR" "PDP WILL RULE NIGERIA FOR YEARS", became prominent, the use of money by the ruling class to remain in power (Joseph, 1991; Adebani, 2022). The tribunals fared no better in handling elections cases and the problems that resulted there-from (Nwabueze, 2008; Ojo, 2021). What with some cases lingering in the court for almost 18 months into the duration of the tenure of the government, eg Edo State in 2007 (Omotola, 2010; Agbaje, 2021). In the meantime, the various tribunals in the 2007 elections nullified or cancelled governorship elections in seven states and upturned the verdict of favor (INEC, 2008; International Crisis Group, 2011). These are Delta, Bayelsa, Kogi, Sokoto, Adamawa, Abia, and Cross River, where elections were cancelled and re-run ordered and conducted with same results (Suberu, 2007; Onuoha, 2022). Those upturned are Rivers, Edo, Ondo and Osun (Omotola, 2010; Okoosi-Simbine, 2021). In the cases of Rivers, the Supreme Court in a landmark ruling handed the governorship to a candidate, Hon. Rotimi Chubuike Ameachi, who was considered to be the rightful person (having won the party's Primary) that would have contested the election under normal circumstances but was not presented for the elections by his party (Supreme Court of Nigeria, 2007; Campbell, 2020). He was unjustly, replaced by his cousin Mr. Celestin Omehia who did not even contest the Primaries (Suberu, 2007; Falola and Heaton, 2022). Edo and Ondo had the elections of their governors reversed by the lower tribunals for malpractices and confirmed at appeal, thereby handing over the reins of power to candidates of opposition parties Action Congress and Labor Party respectively (Ojo, 2010; Agbu, 2021). The tribunal reversed the election in Ondo State in favor of the Labor Party (INEC, 2008; Omotola, 2010). Meanwhile, Nigeria and indeed sub-Saharan African has continued on this path because of the fact that leadership is seen mainly as an avenue to make quick money rather than a call to service (Osaghae, 1998; Hyden, 2021). And with the stupendous wealth at their disposal, African politicians become institutions to themselves and this community and went to dictate what goes (Joseph, 1991; Cheeseman, 2022). Hence, elections are regarded as do-or die affair and voting as the battle ground to prove one's mettle in the act of maneuvering (Ake, 1996; Adejumbi, 2021). Nigerian leaders have always circumvented the general will of the masses in elections in the recent past (Diamond, 1995; Agbu, 2021). The study therefore aims of bringing out the best in democratic praxis as exemplified by the U.S election of 2008 in comparison with the Nigerian presidential elections in 2007 and 2011 (Crotty, 2009; Norris, 2021).

Statement of Problem

The rationale behind this paper is the fact that Nigeria adopted the American style of presidential system of government for about a decade now but it is yet to internalize the basic democratic tenet

in the comparative analysis of the 2007 and 2011 presidential elections in Nigeria and the US presidential election of 2008, in order to identify areas of weakness and strengths in both and how Nigeria can improve on her electoral system.

We acknowledge the series of studies in election and conflict management in the country in particular and the continent in general, but our concern is with the fact that there seems to be no end in sight in reforming the electoral systems in most developing democracies like Nigeria, to correct the anomalies resulting from elections. These have led to further polarization of multi-ethnic societies, particularly in the developing economies of the world. But in the meantime, the world seemed to have placed emphasis, more on the use of election as means of entrenching democracy in hitherto, war ravaged unitary and military dominated developing countries, than the issues of right candidate. The election in Ekiti state was partially cancelled and re-election ordered in ten of the twenty-three wards, and the re-run results is now another matter in contention. In Delta State, there was re-run between Chief O. Ogboru and Dr. E. Udaghan and P.D.P. won again but the case is still in the tribunal. On the security of lives, the period witnessed the rapid upsurge of militancy as well as politically motivated murders of prominent political opponents. These are, Chief Bola Ige (then a serving Minister of Justice and Attorney- General of the Federation), Chief A.K Dikiibo (when a PDP Zonal Chairman, South-south) and Dr. Marshall Harry (a Former PDP Zonal chairman who later crossed carpet to ANPP). The 2011 aftermath of presidential result being announced that resulted to killing and burning of houses in the northern part of Nigeria, the bombing of INEC office at Suleja, leaving many NYSC members dead and INEC staff dead also. Though it is a fact that wherever there are human interaction, there are bound to be conflicts. But conflicts of elections have the potential of snowballing into un- assumed dimensions due to the fact that politics is basically concerned with the principle of justice, allocation of resources and to provide leadership in the polity. The WILD, WILD WEST OR 'WETIE' in the old Western region which degenerated to the first coup in Nigeria in 1966 and the subsequent thirty-month civil war, as well as the recent mayhem in Kenya and Zimbabwe are very clear examples. To this end, electoral conflicts definitely require proper handling in multi-ethnic society.

Objectives of Study

1. To identify the lapses in Nigerian electoral process and their impact on the democratization process in Nigeria.
2. To identify the shortcomings for Nigeria from the 2008 presidential elections in the conduct of future elections
3. To suggest ways and ideas that can reform Nigeria's electoral system and enhance free and fair elections in the country.

Election Concept

There is no universally definition of election. Scholars view elections differently according to their orientations. According to "Dibie" (1999) election is the act of electing candidates to represent the people of a given country in the parliament, the executive and possibly into other arms of government as stipulated in the constitution of that country. He identified some types of elections to include: Bye elections, direct elections, indirect elections, primary elections, run-off elections and referendum. A bye election takes place to fill a vacant elective post as a result of disqualification, resignation or death of the individual holding that office. The election takes place in that constituency where there has been a vacancy. While a run-off election or second ballot is an election conducted when none of the candidates wins the election by majority in a general election.

In the run-off election only the candidates with the highest votes are allowed to contest.

Direct election involves the electorate (voters) casting their votes directly in an election for candidates of their choice by adopting public voting or secret whereby the legislators or local

government unit will from the body known Electoral College who will have to vote for the candidates of their choice on behalf of the citizens as a result of the general election to produce elected candidates. Electoral College on the other hand is a body of elected representatives of local government units who in turn elect people into political offices.

A primary election involves the political parties presenting candidates for any election in a country. It is an election conducted within political to choose credible candidates that can adequately represent the interests of the parties in a general election. Finally a referendum is plebiscite which is also a "yes" or no vote of the people on issues of national importance referred to them. Normally, this process is understood to take place in the following ways. Firstly elections provide an opportunity for the aggrieved to forward candidates of their own hopefully to become governors. Secondly, elections provide an opportunity for the aggrieved to bring their grievances to those seeking office which are likely to be sensitive at such a time. Thirdly, governors in anticipation of the first two possibilities may be the more disposed to shape their policies to suit Constituents (1973) (Dowse and Hughes). "Dinneya" (2006) has argued that electoral process result from a wider distribution of natural rights while electoral processes are indicative of a greater concentration of rights in fewer hands. Both election and selections express the investment of rights and the delegations of authority to the elect and select. Elections include federal, regional, state and local government electoral processes. On the other hand, a system according to the system to the system theory is a whole which functions as a whole by virtue of independence of its parts According to Almond (1960), political systems have universal characteristics and that these characteristics can be conceptualized into schematized approach to the comprehensive and comparative study of politics. Of the many characteristics identified by him, four stands very distinct.

They are

- I. That all political systems have political structures that function within the system to make it work.
- II. ii. That all the different structures within the system within the system function to maintain the whole, system.
- III. All political structures are multi-functional, and all political systems are mixed in the cultural sense.

THE NIGERIA PARTY AND AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM

We choose to examine the American party system because the 1979 and 1989 constitutions were patterned after the American presidential system of government.

Differences between 2007/2011 elections in Nigeria 2007

1. The elections were badly rigged in all states.
2. The INEC and chairman were under the control of the president and party in power.
3. The number of cases before electoral tribunals increased and many of the election results were nullified by the tribunals.
4. The consensus was that most international and local observers agreed that the 2007 elections were flawed and totally poor in organization.
5. The President (Yar'Adua) admitted in his speech that the electoral process that brought him to power was flawed

2011

1. There was significant improvement in the elections.
2. The president gave a free hand to the INEC and the chairman and they did a good job.
3. The member of cases before the electoral tribunals are few and not as contentions as before.
4. The method of voter registration, procedure and collation of results improved tremendously.
5. The elections were reported in the international media as having run smoothly with relatively little violence or voter fraud in contrast.

The party system connotes the number of political parties operated in the polity of each system (Duverger, 1954; Ware, 2021). These are (i) zero party (ii) one party or unitary system (iii) two party and (iv) multi-party system or three party (Sartori, 1976; Heywood, 2019). We do recognize that a nation's cultural and social system, its physical setting, the state of its technology and its relations with other nations all interact with fundamental set of rules which we call the constitution and to which all governmental actions are expected to conform (Almond and Powell, 1966; Ginsberg et al., 2021). Indeed a constitution that do not fit a society's cultural patterns and physical needs would soon change those patterns and needs or itself shrivel up and die (Livingston, 1952; Elazar, 2020). When the American presidential system of government was imported into Nigeria, the structure and powers of government were omitted (Oyediran, 1981; Elaigwu, 2021). Those elements were the heart of the practice of federalism and constitutionalism in America (Wheare, 1963; Watts, 2021). Underlying the evolution of the federal practice in America has been the decentralized nature of the political system (Tocqueville, 1835; Bednar, 2021). At the heart of this decentralized system are political structures that dispense the political process (Dahl, 1989; Sabato, 2020).

The United States practices two party systems (Key, 1964; Fiorina, 2021). Although there are other multiple smaller parties across the states only two parties the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have dominated the political atmosphere in the state thereby making America a two party democracy (Duverger, 1954; Abramowitz, 2020). The basic rules of the party system are largely determined by state law (Epstein, 1986; Hasen, 2022). Except for presidential elections most party funds are collected and distributed by state and local party organization national party organizations are more or less federation of fifty states parties (Sorauf, 1988; Herrnsen, 2021). The national committees exercise no significant control over party personnel in the states (Aldrich, 1995; Cohen et al., 2020). Normally national party leadership plays no role in selecting candidates for congress governorship state legislature or local offices (Ranney, 1976; Sabato, 2020).

'Danielson and Murphy' point out that fundamental to the essence of centralized political parties is the decentralization of the wards of political activity (Danielson and Murphy, 1976; Ware, 2021). For most participants in the US the opportunities for elective offices government contracts and other benefits are greater at state and other local levels than at the national (Dahl, 1989; Skocpol, 2020). Of the more than 500,000 elected offices in America only 537 federal positions and only the president and vice president are elected rather than from state or local electoral districts (Burnham, 1965; Herrnsen, 2021). Opportunities for jobs and contracts are also more numerous at the state and local levels because three out of every four civilian government employees are employed by states or localities (Wilson, 1989; Ginsberg et al., 2021). Party decentralization is further enhanced by the broad scope of state and local activities (Elazar, 1984; Bednar, 2021). As a result these governments control a significant proportion of the rewards essential to the sustenance of political parties (Key, 1964; Fiorina, 2021). Although the political space in America is organized around the two party systems, the following exceptions exist (Sartori, 1976; Abramowitz, 2020). First, for long intervals many states had one party system especially in the presidential elections (V. O. Key, 1949; Sabato, 2020). For example from 1914 to 1954 in only 2 of the then 48 states did the minority party win 25% or more presidential electoral and gubernatorial campaigns (Burnham, 1970; Herrnsen, 2021). Between 1856 and 1973 only 10 of the 50 states had truly competitive two party systems (Ranney, 1976; Fiorina, 2021).

However in subsequent elections these one party monopolies seem to be giving way both in national and state campaigns (Sundquist, 1983; Abramowitz, 2020). For example in the 1960 presidential election the republicans captured Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi and South Carolina and in 1968 the democratic Party had control of Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina and Virginia—all traditional one party democratic states (Key, 1964; Sabato, 2020). However the republicans were unable to consolidate their hold on the South in 1976 elections losing ten out of the eleven states to the democrats (Black and Black, 2002; Fiorina, 2021).

Another significant feature is that third parties have been a constant part of the American political system (Rosenstone et al., 1996; Bibby, 2020). Freesias Green backers populist, Farmer Laborities, Projectories, Bull Moses socialist and national office third parties such as the progressiveness in Wisconsin, the non Partisan league in Dakota and the liberals and conservatives in New York have all been influential in state politics and occasionally have captured a few seats in congress particularly in the House of Representatives (Hofstadter, 1955; Kazin, 2021).

By the result of the 16th April 2011 election the electoral victory of the ruling party the PDP received a boost: the party's overall position improved from 57% in 1999 to 58.89% in 2011 (22,495,187) (INEC, 2011; Omotola, 2013). Unfortunately the vociferous opposition which came from the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) scored 12,214859 (31.98%) and Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN) (2,079151) 5.41% (Jega, 2012; Agbu, 2021).

The international observers endorsed the election results despite the bombing of "INEC" offices at Suleja (Niger State) during the election period which was considered one of the freest and best so far in the history of Nigeria (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2011; Onapajo, 2021). The CPC has gone to court challenging the victory of president Jonathan of (PDP) in the Nigeria highest court and 4th of November has been fixed for final hearing at the supreme court, to decide the winner since they are contesting it (Supreme Court of Nigeria, 2011; Okoosi-Simbine, 2021).

Presidential Election Result

	JONATHAN	BUHARI	RIBADU	SHEARAU
	1,175,954	3,608	4,156	1,455
	508,314	344,526	32,786	2,706
	1,165,629	5,348	54,148	8,777
	1,145,169	4,223	3,437	975
		691	370	136
		1,315,209	16,674	8,777

BENUE	694,776	109,680	223,007	7,705
BORNO	207,075	909,763	7,533	37,279
CROSS RIVER	703,382	4,002	5,839	2,551
DELTA	1,378,851	8,960	13,110	2,746
EBONYI	480,592	1,025	1,102	14,296
EDO	542,173	17,795	54,242	2,174
EKITI	135,009	2,689	116,981	1,482
ENUGU	802,144	3,753	1,755	1,111
FCT	253,444	131,576	2,323	3,170
GOMBE	290,347	459,898	3,420	136
IMO	1,381,357	7,591	14,821	2,520
JIGAWA	419,252	663,994	17,355	7,673
KADUNA	1190,179	1,334,244	11,278	17,361
KANO	440,666	1,624,354	42,353	526,310
KATSINA	428,392	1,163,919	10,945	6,342
KEBBI	369,198	501,453	36,171	3,288
KOGI	399,816	132,201	6,516	16,491
KWARA	268,243	83,603	52,432	1,672
LAGOS	1,281,688	189,983	427,203	8,941
NASARAWA	408,997	278,390	1,204	1,047
NIGER	321,429	652,574	13,334	7,138
OGUN	309,177	17,654	199,555	2,969

ONDO	387,376	11,890	74,253	6,741
OSUN	188,409	6,997	299,711	3,617
OYO	484,758	92,396	252,240	7,156
PLATEAU	1,029,865	356,551	10,181	5,235
RIVERS	1,817,762	13,182	16,382	1,449
SOKOTO	309,057	540,769	20,144	5,063
TARABA	451,354	257,986	17,791	1,203
YOBE	117,128	337,537	6,069	143,179
ZAMFARA	238,980	624,515	17,970	46,554
TOTAL	22,496,157	12,214,529	2,088,791	917,365

Summary of the 16 April 2011 Nigeria Presidential election results

Candidate	Parties	Votes	%
Goodluck Jonathan	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	22,495,187	58.89
Muhammadu Buhari	Congress for Progressive change (CPC)	12,214,853	31.98
Nuhu Ribadu	Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN)	2,079,151	5.41
Ibrahim Shekarau	All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP)	917,012	2.40
Mahmud Waziri	People for Democratic Change (PDC)	82,243	0.21
Nwadike Chikeze	Peoples Mandate Part (PMP)	56,243	0.15
Lawson Igboanugo Aroh	People Progressive Party (PPP)	54,203	0.14
Peter Nwangwu	African Democratic Congress (ADC)	51,682	0.14
Ifeanyichukwu Nnaji	Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP)	47,272	0.12
Chris Okotie	Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH)	34,331	0.09
Ikpele Momodu	National Conscience Party (NCP)	26,376	0.07
Akpona Solomon	National Majority Democratic Party (NMDP)	25,938	0.06
Lawrence Makinde Adedoyin	African Political System (APC)	23,740	0.06
Ebiti Ndok	United National Party for Development (UMPD)	21,203	
John Dora	National Transformation Party (NTP)	19,744	0.05
Rasheed Shitta-Bey	Mega Progressive Peoples Party (MTPPP)	16,492	0.04
Yahaya Ndu	African Renaissance Party (ARP)	12,264	0.03
Ambrose Awuru	Hope Democratic Party (HDP)	12,023	0.03
Patrick Utomi	Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP)	11,544	0.03
Ambrose Awuru	Hope Democratic Party (HDP)	12,023	0.03
Patrick Utomi	Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP)	11,544	0.03

Chris Nwaokobia	Liberal Democratic Party of Nigeria (LDPN)	8,472	0.02
Invalid votes		1,259,506	3.19
Valid votes		39,469,484	96.81
(turnout 53.7%)			

Source: INEC**United State Presidential Election, 2008**

Nominee	Barrack Obama	John McCain.
Party	Democratic	Republican
Home state	Illinois	Arizona
Running mate	Joe Biden	Sarah Palin
Electoral vote	365	173
States carried	28+DC+NE-02	22
Popular vote	69,456,891 (1)	59,934,814 (1)
Percentage	52.9% (1)	45.7% (1)

State	Electors	Obama	McCain	Nader	Barr	Baldwin	McKinney	Other	Obama % margin
New York	31	4,804,701	2,752,728	41,248	19,595	634	12,801	8,938	26.86
North Carolina	15	2,142,651	2,128,474	1,448	25,722		158	13,942	0.33
North Dakota	3	141,278	168,601	4,189					-8.65
Ohio	20	2,940,044	2,677,820	42,337	19,917	12,565	8,518	7,149	4.58
Oklahoma	7	502,496	960,165						-31.29
Oregon	7	1,037,291	738,475	18,614	7,635	7,693	4,543	13,613	16.35
Pennsylvania	21	3,276,363	2,655,885	42,977	19,912	1,092			10.3
Rhode Island	4	296,571	165,391	4,829	1,382	675	797	122	27.8
South Carolina									
South Dakota	8	862,449	1,034,896	5,053	7,283	6,827	4,461		-8.9
South Carolina									
South Dakota	3	170,924	203,054	4,267	1,835	1,895			-8.4
Tennessee	11	1,087,437	1,479,178	11,560	8,547	8,191	2,499	2,337	-15.0
Texas	34	3,528,633	4,479,328	5,440	56,116	5,395	831	2,781	-11.7
Utah	5	327,670	596,030	8,416	6,966	12,012	982	294	-28.0
Vermont	3	219,262	98,974	3,339	1,067	500	66	1,904	37.0

Virginia	13	1,959,532	1,725,005	11,483	11,067	7,474	2,344	6,355	6.3
Washington	11	1,750,848	1,229,216	29,489	12,728	9,432	3,819	1,346	17.0
West Virginia	5	303,857	397,466	7,219		2,465	2,355	89	-13.0
Wisconsin	10	1,677,211	1,262,393	17,605	8,858	5,072	4,216	8,062	13.0
Wyoming	3	82,868	164,958	2,525	1,594	1,192		1,512	-32.2
S. Total	538	69,498,215	59,948,240	738,720	523,713	199,437	161,680	226,976	7.2

CONCLUSION

We have argued that the 2003 and 2007 presidential elections in Nigeria were the worst in Nigeria's political history but the 2011 was the best. We equally argued that the American presidential election of November, 2008 was as exciting as it was full of lessons for Nigeria's democracy since we claim to practice the American style presidential system.

We have identified five important lessons that Nigeria need to learn from the U.S 2008 election. These include: the importance of politics of ideology. the imperative of a transparent process, the benefits of early political preparation and free and fair elections, choosing the right persons for the jobs, and a need to conduct a smooth transition of power.

Having compared the two countries electoral processes, we want to conclude by saying that the 2011 elections in Nigeria were indeed very good if compared to the past ones. Nigeria's political class has consistently demonstrated its unwillingness to change the political history of the country for better. They have continued to undermine the political process for their selfish interests. It is on this premise that we want to say that unless there is a change in our orientation about politics towards the desire to pursue politics of ideas, issues of common interests and development, we may continue to oscillate in corrupt and dirty political struggles and practices. Nigeria's democratic system is rudimentary where the functioning of the apparatus of state is heavily dependent on individuals not on institutions. Institutions are run by people, but natural and effective institutions depend on certain traditions built over the years, which transcend particular individuals. Regrettably, our political institutions are yet to evolve such institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having identified the pitfalls of the 2011 elections in Nigeria in sharp contrast with the US presidential election in 2008 which brought president, Barack Obama to power, we want to make the following recommendations:

- The first step in achieving very good election in Nigeria is a deliberate socio-political engineering engender transparency in the system and encourage participation. This could be achieved only by carrying through with the electoral reforms with in the current dispensation.
- Respect for human rights. Inherent in democracy are basic rights that individuals and groups must enjoy. Respect for those rights is in itself a conflict prevention measure.
- The legislature should expedite action to review the constitution as well as the electoral laws to forestall the recurrent loopholes which have continued to make the resolution of electoral crisis cumbersome as well as the punishment of electoral offenders difficult. It makes no sense if in election rigging, Governors and their collaborators are aided by tribunal judgments to have a longer term in office by re-contesting re-turn elections, having been found guilty of electoral offenders should in addition to losing their seats, forfeit their nominations to act as deterrence and also minimize the rampant cases of both administrative and individual malpractices.

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