

ELECTORAL FRAUD AND DEMOCRATIC ELECTION: A COMPARISON OF NIGERIA 2019 ELECTIONS AND UNITED STATES 2020 ELECTIONS

Powei H. KERRY,

Nile University of Nigeria, International Relations & Diplomacy,

powei.kerry@gmail.com

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 2019 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 2019 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.

Keywords: *Democracy, Election, Electoral Fraud, Nigeria, United States.*

DOI: 10.31039/jgss.v2i7.27

1. Introduction

The characteristics of a genuinely democratic system lie in the integrity, legitimacy, and credibility of the electoral process, which must be free, fair, participatory, and competitive only then, will any conducted election earn the democratic medal. Thus, the absence of these ingredients in any democratic setting will be nothing short of electoral fraud. Democratic elections create room for the electorates to elect representatives into political offices; however, its conduct remains a challenge to democratic governance in most developed and developing countries.

In the case of Nigeria, electoral fraud had always been a reoccurring word in the mouth of members of political parties right from the reinstatement of democracy in 1999. However, in contrast to the United States, electoral fraud was not a cause for concern, though some elections have had controversies recorded in the past. For example, the 2016 elections between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump recorded a low approval rating. Fast-forward to the United States 2020 elections; electoral fraud became a buzzword in the mouth of the Republican party members. But, unfortunately, the opposition party put forward the argument in the 2019 general elections conducted in Nigeria. Undoubtedly, reports of electoral fraud in the said election did not come as a surprise, knowing that the country in time past has earned the reputation for ‘muddled elections’ (Suberu, 2007).

Interestingly, the United States used to be a model for democratic elections, especially to developing countries, until the 2020 presidential elections that saw the Former President of the United States, Donald Trump making allegations of widespread fraud in the electoral process. The former President, however, described the millions of votes counted from the mail-in ballots as fraudulent. His campaign team challenged the results in six key states, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Michigan, Arizona, Nevada, and Wisconsin, where the electoral votes favoured the opposition, Joe Biden. However, the judges uniformly rejected Donald Trump’s legal team claims of vote fraud. In December 2020, the Electoral College decisively confirmed Joe Biden’s victory, and Donald Trump chose not to concede and never attended the inauguration of his successor (Sherman, 2020).

Although the decision by President Trump not to attend the inauguration was a break from the norm, however; it is not without precedent. A sizeable number of American presidents have also missed the inaugurations of their successors, which is an indication that the United States democracy election is in a significant political feud between the Democratic and the Republicans. The opposition party made the 2020 election a manifestation of the political polarisation dividing the country more than ever before. Electoral fraud, therefore, is the illegitimate interference with the electoral process to upset and unseat the election results, thereby truncating the process and increasing the vote-share of a preferred candidate (Kerry, 2021).

When you put the above definition into context, the cases of electoral fraud are rare in elections in the United States. The Brennan Center for Justice, 2017 survey adjudged electoral fraud in the United States to be less than 0.0009%, and no evidence has shown that electoral fraud is a

significant issue. (BBC News, 2020). However, compared to Nigeria, her general elections are reportedly being marred with several reports of irregularities as far back as 1999 after a prolonged military rule that spanned close to two decades (Omotola, 2010). That is why the kinks in the 2019 general elections were nothing short of expectations from the Nigerian populace.

However, the alleged flawed United States 2020 general elections became a subject of global debate because of the respect and trust bestowed on the United States as one of the oldest continuous constitutional democracies with over 200 years (World Economic Forum, 2019). Unfortunately, this development shows the new norm in developed and developing countries. Electoral integrity has constantly been replaced with electoral fraud, resulting in obscurity and unaccountability, truncating the satisfaction derived in a democratic election. The continuous interference with the people's mandate in a democratic election will truncate good governance, and the practice of true democracy cannot thrive in such an atmosphere.

According to Nwogu (2015), the United States and Nigeria practised representative democracy where the power to choose leaders representing the people both at the regional legislative and executive level is in the hands of the people. But, unfortunately, this process has been undermined, and electoral malpractices witnessed in developing countries are now visible in developed countries. In the past, the United States elections used to be a model for other developed and developing countries.

However, in the past, scholars had raised concerns regarding all aspects of its elections, from voters' registration fraud to voting machine security, especially since the 2000 presidential election, when the world heard about the accusations of electoral manipulation (Norris, 2016). These scholars argued that electoral fraud is rampant and that the United States elections are completely corrupt with some considerable element of vote-buying, election manipulation, mandate stolen, amongst others (Lehoucq, 2003). The United States 2020 presidential elections and the alleged claims by the former President have bolstered their arguments. This act has opened a can of worms on the respected electoral system despite the certification by the Electoral College. However, some scholars have dismissed election fraud claims as partisan, and that election fraud in the United States is nonexistent.

Regionally, the alarm of electoral fraud echoed in the 2006 presidential elections held in Italy and several former Soviet republics (Alvarez et al., 2006). The allegations of fraud also showed

its ugly head in Mexico's 2006 presidential election. Another example is the Poland presidential election. Poland's incumbent President, Mr Andrzej Duda, a social conservative allied with the government led by the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, to contest against Mr Trzaskowski, a socially liberal mayor of Warsaw, in the 2020 elections. President Andrzej won the election by 51.2% of the votes; reports in the media claimed irregularities and fraud marred the polls (BBC, 2020).

In Africa, cases of electoral fraud are not a new phenomenon; several States' in the continent have had elections marred with electoral scams, violence, ballot snatching. For instance, in the Mozambique 2004 Presidential Election, there were alleged irregularities. As a result, international observers criticised the elections, and the dominant opposition party, Renamo, the independent press, also challenges the legitimacy of the results (USAID, 2006).

The just-concluded 2020 elections in Ghana where the opposition candidate John Mahama tagged the presidential and parliamentary election results as "fraudulent". Indeed, it paints a negative picture of a democratic state (Ghana Web, 2020). Likewise, the reports of Nigeria's general elections marred with electoral malpractices since the inception of democracy is no longer news to her citizens. (Oguejiofor, 2018). Therefore, it was not a surprise to anyone when the defeated presidential candidate of the 2019 elections, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, contested the results in court based on electoral frauds (Campbell, 2019). The court, however, upheld the results of the incumbent President, Muhammad Buhari.

The study noted that electoral fraud in developing countries like Nigeria has always been the norm as reports of fraud, violence and vote-buying are reported constantly in the media. Howbeit, the United States elections became openly controversial when in 2016, Hillary Clinton, the Democratic presidential candidate, alarmed the world of Russian interference in the election results. Since then, democratic elections in the United States became questionable, while party members continue to use the blame game tactics to question the electoral process. Little wonder why we saw the then-incumbent President Trump witch-hunting the democratic election process in the 2020 elections.

On this note, the study aims to analyse Nigeria's 2019 and the United States 2020 elections using a qualitative research method. In carrying out this study, the paper will look at conceptual clarification, the relationship between electoral fraud and democratic elections, theories of electoral fraud and democratic elections. First, the study dimmed its searchlights on the

historical antecedents of elections in Africa and developed countries comparing the United States' liberal democracy and Nigeria's quasi-democracy. Next, the study discusses the two ideologies that dominate the international system and how it affects the electoral process in Africa and the United States. Third, the quality of elections in Africa and the most common perceptions concerning them, the dangers of electoral fraud on democratic elections, and finally, the study will give conclusions and recommendations for policymaking.

In this section, the study will look at the independent variable, Electoral fraud and the dependent variable, a democratic election. However, the concept of a 'democratic election' is new; as such, the paper will break the idea into two, 'democracy' and 'elections' and discuss it concerning scholarly views and its suitability in making deductions.

2. A Review of the Cases of Electoral Fraud in Nigeria and the United States Elections

Although Nigeria and the United States practices a representative form of government with democratically elected leaders, however, the presidential elections in the United States differ from that of Nigeria. For instance, Nigeria elects her President through a direct universal suffrage system. Still, the United States elects its political candidates directly by popular vote while the President and vice-president are chosen by "electors" through a process called the Electoral College (N.Y. Times, 2020). Scholars have conducted extensive research into the history of electoral fraud in the United States; Levitt (2007) and Minnite (2010) conclude that little to no voter fraud of any stripe has occurred in recent United States elections.

However, not everyone accepts these conclusions because such pronouncement depends on the investigation by electoral observers (Fund 2004). After all, voter fraud may be difficult to detect when done well (Ahlquist, Mayer, and Jackman 2014; Christensen and Schultz2013). The authors' primary piece of evidence is the prosecution of those involved in voter fraud. The Heritage Foundation opines that the United States has a long and unfortunate history of election fraud, with proof across the country broken down State by State. Individuals convicted of vote fraud or a state where a judge overturned the results of an election (the Heritage Foundation, 2020).

Fogarty et al. (2015) pointed their attention to local newspaper claims of voter fraud in the 50 states during the 2008 and 2012 U.S. elections. The findings, however, reflected the rise in prominence of electoral fraud by parties which places voter fraud on the political agenda in strategically essential states to motivate their voting base ahead of the election.

The Brennan Center's (2007) presented a seminal report on this issue, *The Truth About Voter Fraud*, which found that most reported incidents of voter fraud are traceable to other sources, such as clerical errors or insufficient data matching practices. The report reviewed elections studied for voter fraud found incident rates between 0.0003 percent and 0.0025 percent. Another study published by a Columbia University political scientist tracked incidence rates for voter fraud for two years and found traces of fraud. Finally, a 2017 analysis published in *The Washington Post* concluded that there is no evidence to support Trump's claim that it bussed Massachusetts residents to vote in New Hampshire.

A comprehensive study published in the 2014 *Washington Post* found 31 credible instances of impersonation fraud from 2000 to 2014, with over 1 billion ballots cast. However, two studies conducted at Arizona State University in 2012 and 2016 discovered 10 cases of voter's impersonation nationwide from 2000 to 2012. A follow-up study, which looked for fraud specifically in states where politicians have argued that fraud is a pernicious problem, found zero successful prosecutions for impersonation fraud in five states from 2012 to 2016.

A 2016 election review found four documented cases of voter fraud; however, there was concrete evidence of voter fraud uncovered in similar findings regarding the 2016 election. A 2016 working paper noted that the incident rate was 0.02%, resulting from errors. In addition, A study conducted in 2014 nationwide found no evidence of widespread impersonation fraud in the 2012 election.

Another study done in 2014 found zero instances when it examined the rate of impersonation fraud both at the polls and mail-in system. A non-partisan Government Accountability Office did a literature review on the existing research on voter fraud. The study consistently found few instances of in-person voter fraud. For example, while writing a 2012 book, a researcher went back 30 years to see an example of voter impersonation fraud in determining the outcome of an election but could not find even one.

A 2012 survey conducted by election monitoring groups on electoral fraud in the United States found the overall fraud rate to be "infinitesimal". In addition, a 2009 analysis examined 12 states and found that fraud by voters was "very rare" and concluded that many of the cases that garnered media attention were ultimately unsubstantiated upon further review.

Barile (2013) opines that the absence of popular participation in the political process,

corruption, lack of responsiveness and accountability by those who rule are characteristics of electoral fraud in Nigeria.

Aluaigba (2016) recorded that since the re-emergence of democracy in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic, after over three decades of military rule, the six elections conducted in Nigeria are all staggered to date. As a result, the election results have shared electoral frauds as a standard feature. However, the inference drawn from the conduct of general elections in Nigeria does not demonstrate the attributes of a growing democracy (Yagboyaju 2011, p. 93). Unfortunately, these views do not differ with several scholars and international observers.

Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), the Carter Center, National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI) and the European Union Election Observer Mission (EU-EOM) reported cases of isolated sharp practices and irregularities. Nwangwu et al. (2018) ascribed that the 2003 general elections were replete with irregularities and violence. In their various reports, domestic and international election observers admitted massive electoral malpractices during the general elections.

Ezeani (2005) opines that INEC officials and its unscrupulous officials perpetrate electoral fraud in Nigeria. Furthermore, different accredited election observers like the TMG, The Carter Center, NDI, IRI, and EU-EOM attest that massive irregularities marred the 2007 General Elections in Nigeria, ending at the Supreme Court.

Although, the 2011 General Elections were relatively credible, accessible, and fair, with fewer reported incidents of violence or blatant police abuses than in previous years. Despite the improvements, there were still incidents of violence, reports of police misconduct, voter intimidation, hijacking of ballot boxes by party thugs, ballot box stuffing, vote-buying, multiple voting, over-voting, underage voting, falsification of results and other associated electoral irregularities (Oladimeji et al., 2013). The 2015 general elections were not perfect, but it was an improved version of the 2013 election, which helped improve the credibility of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. However, in the 2019 election in Nigeria, rigging occupies a prominent place, and the cases of underage voting were prominent Verjee et al., (2018).

Electoral Fraud

Several scholars have given a different meaning to the concept of electoral fraud as the term is relative depending on perspectives.

Lehoucq (2013), in his paper “Electoral Fraud: Causes, Types, and Consequences”, define electoral fraud as ‘clandestine efforts to shape election results. The definition only gives a picture of the efforts made to change election results for political gains. Still, it does not completely give a detailed meaning to electoral fraud as it relates to democracy. Rafael López-Pintor, in his paper “Assessing Electoral Fraud in New Democracies: A Basic Conceptual Framework.” Defined electoral fraud as any purposeful action taken to tamper with electoral activities and election-related materials affects the results of an election, which may interfere with or thwart the will of the voters. This definition by Rafael is all-encompassing; it gives a detailed meaning to the subject of electoral fraud to automatically subvert the will of the people in a democratic election. Therefore, the definition is acceptable and suitable for this paper.

Democratic Election

Kerry (2021) defined a democratic election as a violence-free process with an agreed structure that is transparent, legitimate, credible, respecting the right and will of the people to choose their representatives or leaders without centrifugal forces’ interference system subvert the process. First, the author explained that for a democratic election, the people would have to agree on the structure to conduct the election. Second, it must be transparent to see and not marred with any form of violence in carrying out the process. Third, national interest should supersede individuals’ interest, allowing the method to go smoothly without letting corrupt practices and their differences in their religious beliefs, culture, and other electoral vices get in the way. Therefore, the definition by Kerry is suitable for this paper.

3. Theoretical Framework

Most explanatory theories analyse electoral fraud better, especially when comparing it with an advanced democracy like the United States and a developing democracy like Nigeria. The elite political theory looks at the few minorities in any country occupying critical positions in the economic, political, and military institutions that can effect changes in the political system. The democratic theory examines the procedure for protecting the outcomes of any political competition and what it entails for democracy to work. The game theory examines the

incentives of the ruling party to carry out electoral fraud, that of stealing votes from the main opposition party. Conspiracy theories believe that some secretive group is responsible for a significant and political event. However, the paper will use the game theory and the conspiracy theories to analyse Nigeria's 2019 and the United States 2020 elections.

John von Neumann and his Princeton University colleague Oskar Morgenstern developed the game theory. However, Avinash Dixit and Barry Nalebuff refer to game theory as the science of strategy, which mathematically and logically determines the actions that "players" should take to secure the best outcomes for themselves in an array of "games," let the best player win. The games may range from all spectrums; however, participants' development depends on each participant's choices. Most times, the player's interest's conflicts make one participant gain to be another's loss. For example, Beatriz Magaloni, a political science scholar, used the game theory model to show how the ruling party uses incentives to carry out electoral fraud.

He bolsters his point using three parties: the ruling party, the primary party opponent, and a third force. The game theory model examines the incentives of the ruling party to carry out electoral fraud, with fraud defined as the stealing of votes from the main opposition party. The third force in a political contest most times act as the spoiler. The theory analysis some instances where the third force, under some conditions, plays an essential part in a democratic election. While all parties involved in an election have perfect information about the actual results of an election, voters may not be aware of fraudulent practices. They draw their conclusions from the decisions of the opposition parties to oppose or accept the election results. Given that there are two main opposition parties, voters will have different responses when one party disagrees.

The Nigerian 2019 general election is a case in point. The ruling party that is the All-Progressives Congress (APC) party won their reelection bid. However, the opposition party, People Democratic Party (PDP), chaired by Uche Secondus, called the voter's count "incorrect and unacceptable", alleging that the ruling party manipulated the voter card readers. The Peoples Coalition Party (PCP) was the third force in the election playing out the game theory tenets, though the figures recorded for PCP seemed insignificant in this case.

However, you may recall that the APC accused the PDP of electoral fraud when the PDP were in power. The APC may decide to cheat to gain political control based on the short-term gains from fraud, not minding the long-term losses it may incur from defection its floating voters.

The ruling party may also choose to manipulate the electorates' votes to win the opposition party every time the country conducts elections, ultimately making the democratic system Shambolic and, thus, promoting electoral fraud.

Compared to the United States, the paper opted for conspiracy theory to compare and analyse electoral fraud. Conspiracy theory became popular through Michael Barkun, a political scientist who believes that 'for any conjoint operation of persons, whether civil, criminal, or political. Mark Fenster (2008) defines conspiracy theory as the conviction that an individual or group controls the political and social order or some part thereof. The United States 2020 general elections had six conspiracy theories, but the court debunked all the widespread fraud or electoral malpractice claims. Here are some claims by President Trump lawyer used to undermine the election results.

President Trump's lawyers made a case that some states used voting machines programmed to flip votes meant for President Trump to favour the Democratic candidate, Joe Biden, or delete votes for President Trump, the Republican candidate. First, the lawyers allegedly recovered 6,000 of Trump's total votes flipped to Biden in the state of Michigan. Second, unauthorised invalidation of Trump votes in Arizona, the state election officials quickly debunked these claims. Third, that mail-in voting is rife with fraud. Fourth, people were throwing out ballots or "finding" suitcases full of ballot papers. Fifth, the state officers blocked poll watchers from observing the vote counted, and finally, there were thousands of votes by dead people or people voting multiple times. This accusation game between the Democrats and the Republicans continues to play out in the recent election conducted.

In a flashback to the 2016 elections in the United States, we saw the Presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton of the Democratic party, accused Russia of interfering with the election results. Naturally, this led the liberalists to believe that President Trump's election into office was fraudulent. Fast forward, the 2020 elections, former President Trump, a conservative, think that there was a widespread of electoral fraud, making the event of the 6th of January at the Capitol inevitable because Trump's supporter has not yet come to terms that their candidate lost the election. If the opposition object to the results of the election, they believe that fraud has taken place.

The, unfortunately, resulted in a sad event that took place at the Capitol. While the democrats believe that the American electoral system is in good order and disapprove of hasty actions

made by former President Trump based on “insufficient evidence”. Trump’s supporters believe that the United States has corrupt structures. All these conspiracy theories made Trump and his supporters did not concede, despite the impeachment saga that almost banned him from holding political office. The payoff to this decision is a rather gloomy prognostication for the United States democracy. Though this allegation has been thrown out of the window of the United States’ justice system because the claims are baseless, the theories remain in the mind of Trump’s supporters.

4. Comparative Analysis of Electoral Fraud in Nigeria’s 2019 Elections and the United States 2020 Elections.

The 2019 general election was not the first time the country found itself in political turmoil because of electoral fraud. Elections in Nigeria have been an affair threatening the country’s peace in the First Republic, the Second Republic, the Aborted Third Republic, and even the present Fourth Republic (Babayo et al., 2020). However, the 2019 elections deepened democratic practice in Nigeria and kept the hope of continuous civilian rule. Unfortunately, besides the horror of violence and threats, imbroglios and political confusion accompanied past elections in Nigeria.

The INEC in Nigeria in 2016 registered 93 political parties, and 73 of them contested for the presidency. The 2019 elections was a battle between the ruling APC of Muhammadu Buhari and the main opposition PDP of Atiku Abubakar. The results showed that President Buhari secured 55.54% of the total votes; the PDP scored 41.18% while other parties scored 3.28% (Sule, 2019). The paper will look at the voting pattern obtained in Nigeria 2019 elections and the United States in comparing both elections.

Voting Patterns

One factor determining the voting patterns of the electorates in developed and developing countries is the voters’ turnout. Nigeria’s general elections have always recorded political apathy because of the attitude of the political officeholders. The political parties always promised heaven on earth to the voters during the electioneering campaign. After assuming power, they reneged against their promises and transformed themselves into emperors who enrich themselves from the public treasury at the expense of developmental projects (Sule et al., 2017). The voting pattern in Nigeria can take three major approaches: sociological, party identification and rational choice (Mudasiru, 2015)

The APC candidate Muhammadu Buhari has a stronghold in the Northwest and Northeast, the traditional supporting ground since he started contesting for the Presidential seat in 2003. The PDP nearly became an official party of the South-South and South-West since 1999, especially with President Goodluck Jonathan from the South-South in 2011. As expected, the Northwest and Northeast voted massively for President Buhari, while the South-East and South-South voted for Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. President Buhari popularity seems to be in the North-West and North-East as the charismatic leader that is religious, incorruptible and a dominant Hausa/Fulani that has been contesting from the region since 2003 with overwhelming support. In contrast, the Northwest and Northeast perceive Atiku Abubakar as corrupt, elite-oriented, and pro-southern. On the other hand, the Southeast and South-South saw President Buhari as a religious bigot and ethnic chauvinist in which Atiku was not to them.

The North-Central states shared among the two leading contenders, with the APC candidate winning in four of the six states but with a narrow margin. However, the South-West zone presented a surprise because it is one stronghold of APC. The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and the political godfather in the region Sweet Bola Ahmed Tinubu, spearheaded the alliance and formation of the APC to have access to corridors of power and possibly to have the power returned to the Southwest after the eight years of President Buhari. Moreover, the APC national leader Bola Ahmed Tinubu is from there; the zone benefitted more than any other principal political offices and infrastructure in the 4-years of the APC regime. Power has been shared almost equally between the APC and the PDP in the region, indicating a low level of patronage and political culture of that geo-political zone.

The APC candidate secured massive votes from the Northeast and Northwest to emerge victoriously. In contrast, the PDP candidate secured his significant votes from the Southeast and South-South justified by Falola & Heaton (2008), Sule et al. (2018) and Mudasiru (2015).

Unlike Nigeria, the United States electorates voted in record numbers in the 2020 presidential election, casting nearly 158.4 million ballots. A preliminary Pew Research Center analysis fueled partly by the bitter fight between incumbent President Donald Trump and challenger Joe Biden works out over six in ten people of voting age and nearly two-thirds of estimated eligible voters. In addition, a pre-election survey found a record share of registered voters (83%) saying it “really matters” who won. But another significant factor was the dramatic steps many states took to expand mail balloting and early voting because of the COVID-19 pandemic (DeSilver, 2021).

Two political parties dominate the United States political system; the Republican and the Democrat. The Republicans are a conservative political party vying for reelection; in contrast, the Democrats are the liberal political party. The democratic candidate, Joe Biden, is an experienced politician best-known for serving as Barack Obama's vice president for eight years. Maine and Nebraska have a winner-takes-all rule, and the electoral votes go to whichever candidate wins the popular vote there. California has 55 electoral votes, followed by Texas - 38 votes, and Florida with 29 votes (The Guardian News, 2020).

Joe Biden is from Delaware with three electoral votes, while Donald Trump is from Florida. Florida was one of six states where Trump received more percentage of the two-party vote than he did in 2016. California, Hawaii, Illinois, Nevada, and New York, including Washington DC, are the other states. Delaware is Biden's home, and he has represented the state in the United States from 1973 to 2009 for 36 years. The 2020 election saw Biden defeated Trump in the state by a margin of 19%, a significant improvement over Hillary Clinton's 11% margin over Trump in 2016.

In addition, Joe Biden won six key states: Arizona 11 electoral college votes; Georgia 16 electoral college votes; Michigan 16 electoral college votes; Nevada 6 electoral college votes; Pennsylvania 20 electoral college votes; and Wisconsin 10 electoral college votes. Trump won Ohio 18 electoral college votes; North Carolina 15 electoral college votes; and Florida 29 electoral college votes.

It is pertinent to note that the 1996 election was the last time Arizona voted Democratic for President. Still, the state has become increasingly competitive as the Hispanic share of the electorate has grown. As a result, the Democrats gained several seats in the 2018 midterms. Since 1964, Florida has voted with the eventual winner in all but one presidential election. Georgia used to be a long Republican stronghold. Still, southern Georgia became a battlefield due to black voters. In the 2018 governor's election, Republican Brian Kemp defeated Democrat Stacey Abrams by 1.4 percentage points. Although Trump won Michigan with 0.2 percentage points in 2016, previous elections have seen the state voted Democratic.

Nevada's population skyrocketed in the past two decades, and the votes shared among the Latino, Black and Asian American voters. The 2016 elections saw Hillary Clinton won Nevada by a margin of 2.4 percentage points. Women voted at higher rates than men, with Biden made gains among college-educated, white women. Among Black women, the number was higher,

about 91 percent, as exit polls stand now with 80 percent Black men. However, 55% of white women voted for Trump, representing at least a two-point increase for this demographic since 2016.

Nigeria adopted the smart card technology in the 2019 general elections. An integral part of the biometric voting system checks voters' authenticity and reduces the possibility of electoral fraud and irregularities in elections. However, the smart card has improved the integrity of elections since its introduction in Nigeria's electoral process. Using permanent voter cards (PVC) verified by electronic card readers to accredit voters who show up at polling units. The two-step authentication eliminates the dual problems of impersonation, underage, and multiple voting. However, the inability of the technological device to authenticate permanent voter cards created room for electoral fraud (Fatai, 2020).

The United States, for the past 18 years, has been using the electoral voting system despite the broad claim of interference by the Russian government. About 46% voted by absentee or mail-in ballot, while about one-quarter (27%) report having voted in person on Election Day. An identical share says they voted in person before Election Day (Pew Research Center, 2020). The mail-in paper ballot or a machine that produces a verifiable and auditable paper trail. Paper balloting auditable results there seen as the gold standard among security experts.

In conducting a free and fair election, election-related agencies are pertinent to ensuring electoral integrity, meaningfully displaying sufficient independence and impartiality in the elections. For example, the United States has sturdy independent structures like the Election Assistance Commission, separated from the President. Thus, the President does not have the power to upset the results of an election. However, while in Nigeria, the President determines who becomes the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and can control and manipulate the result using the INEC chairman.

There were alleged cases where the INEC had to cancel votes considered the support bases of the opposition party. The political actors allegedly engineered the INEC emperor's sudden postponement of the presidential election a few hours before its commencement, although there was no substantial proof. The massive deployment of security personnel to areas where the opposition was dominant claimed to discourage voters from exercising their rights, thereby discouraging voters from exercising their rights.

The United States has an official election auditing system that validates election outcomes and voters' confidence. On the other hand, Nigeria's electoral process is structurally weak state institutions, and these institutions are vulnerable to manipulation by the political elite. Based on deductive reasoning, the United States, despite their challenges, has strong electoral structures and institutes that can prevent electoral fraud compared to Nigeria. However, there is no perfect system anywhere in the world. The United States liberal democratic practices and ideological preferences have dominated its political system (Liberals or Conservative). The Republicans remain mostly a Conservative Party, while the Democrats are the Liberal party. Therefore, one may conclude that the American practice of democracy gives minimal room for electoral fraud.

Nigeria is still a developing state and needs time to get to being called developed. Howbeit, if the country is serious about growing its flinging democracy, partisanship, cultural cleavages must take the backstage when choosing its leaders. Thus, Nigeria's electoral system is not ripe for comparison with an advanced democracy like the United States. Instead, the country needs to learn lessons that will help develop its democracy. Though electoral fraud and manipulation may be difficult to prevent in Nigeria general election, the EMB can minimise the impact of electoral fraud with high technology and transparency in the electoral system.

There is, therefore, no basis for comparison between the 2019 Nigerian elections in Nigeria and the United States, though they had similar features like violence and vote-buying. However, the American practice of democracy gives minimal room for electoral fraud. Moreover, Nigeria is still a developing state and needs time to get to being called developed. Howbeit, if the country is serious about growing its flinging democracy, partisanship, cultural cleavages must take the backstage when choosing its leaders.

5. Conclusions

The study compared the United States and Nigeria's electoral system and noted the following observations in concluding the paper. First, Nigeria is still struggling with card readers and is yet to identify with electronic voting. Second, the United States' electoral structures have moved beyond the electoral voting system and use the mail-in ballot system to manage crises or emergencies. Little wonder why the cases of electoral fraud are minute.

Despite the alarm raised by the incumbent of the United States, Donald Trump, all the allegations were fact-checked and thrown out by the justice system. It is essential to state that

we rarely heard of electoral fraud in advanced democracies due to the inability to access adequate data to conclude. However, Trump's alleged persistent claims of electoral fraud in the 2020 election are inimical to the United States' democracy. Of course, this does not make the United States elections perfect in any form, as several cases alleged by scholars on the United States previous elections. It is just that in this case, it was an eye-opener to those who believe in the credibility of the United States election. On the other hand, Nigeria's general elections, including 2019, recorded significant irregularities and mass violence in the past.

The study observed that the Nigerian 2019 elections came when the world was not experiencing a coronavirus pandemic, unlike the United States who conducted elections in the means of a pandemic. Therefore, the issues and challenges affecting both countries are pretty different. However, the similarity is violence; while Nigeria could not manage the political violence that erupted during the elections, the United States could curtail it. The destruction of the Capitol building came after the polls. But, of course, the security agents did not factor it when analysing electoral violence.

The paper brought out the differences in voting patterns in the United States and Nigeria. For example, Nigeria used smart card technology for its electorates in the 2019 elections. But, of course, it had significant challenges in most rural areas and some parts of the urban site. The card reader's failure to authenticate the voter's card resulted in manual accreditation and voting, which grossly violated the voter's card INEC's guideline. On the other hand, the United States used the electronic voting system in its 2020 elections. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Biden camp encouraged voters to vote via absentee or mail-in ballot. As a result, only Trump's supporters voted in person.

Nigeria's electoral system is not ripe to be compared with an advanced democracy like the United States. Instead, the country needs to learn lessons that will help develop its democracy. The paper recommended, based on the deductions that the Nigerian government should:

- Technologically upgrade INEC to an electronic voting system whereby voters can vote without travelling and standing in the long queue for PVC verification.
- Learn from the United States independent Electoral Assistance Commission by being financially independent of the state.
- Create the need for rural voter's sanitisation before the next election.
- Create an independent election management body to checkmate the INEC.

- INEC should encourage drone technology to monitor elections in rural and urban areas, stopping doubts about the polls, especially regarding electoral disputes.

REFERENCES

- Aarts, Kees, & Jacques Thomassen. (2008). "Satisfaction with Democracy: Do Institutions Matter?" *Electoral Studies* 27 (1): 5–18. DOI: 10.1016/j.electstud.2007.11.005,
- Abdullahi, S.A. (2015). Youth, political parties and electoral violence in Nigeria. In Mohammed, H. (Ed.) *The patterns and dynamics of party politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic*. Kano, Hallmark Publishing Nigeria LTD.
- Amartya, S. (1999). *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Adanikin, O. (2019). 2019 elections large turnout, late arrival of election materials in South West, North Central States. (Featured News).
- Adepegba, A. (2019). Police deployed 300,000 for presidential election, *PunchNewspaper*.
- Akinyemi, S. (2019). Voter apathy: A threat to democracy in Nigeria. *Democracy in Africa*, the 24th of April. Retrieved the 30th of June, 2020, <http://democracyinafrica.org/voter-apaty-threat-democracy-nigeria>
- Alvarez, R.M, Thad E. H, & Susan D. Hyde (2016). *Introduction: Studying Election Fraud*. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/electionfraud_chapter.pdf
- Avinash.D.&Barry, N.(2006). *Game Theory*. <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/GameTheory.html>.

- Alvarez, R.M, & Thad E. Hall. (2006). 'Controlling democracy: The principal-agent problems in election administration.' *Policy Studies Journal* 34(4): 491-510; R. Akinboye, S.O., & Anifowose, R. (2008). Nigerian government and politics. In Anifowose, R., & Enemu, F. (Eds.) *Elements of politics*. Lagos, Sam Iroanusi Publishers. Arrows, K. (1951) *Social values and individual values*. New York, John Wiley & Sons.
- Auwal, A. (2015). Political parties and electoral misconduct in Nigeria. In Mohammed, H. (Eds.). *The patterns and dynamics of party politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic*. Kano Hallmark Publishing Nigeria LTD.
- Alemika, Ettanibi. (2007). *Quality of Elections, Satisfaction with Democracy, and Political Trust in Africa*. Afrobarometer Working Paper (84).
- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Anderson, Christopher J., André Blais, Shaun Bowler, Todd Donovan, and Ola Listhaug. (2005). *Losers' Consent. Elections and Democratic Legitimacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Christopher J., and Christine Guillory. (1997). "Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems." *American Political Science Review* 91 (1): 66–81. DOI: 10.2307/2952259
- Anderson, Christopher J., and Yuliya V. Tverdova. (2001). "Winners, Losers, and Attitudes about Government in Contemporary Democracies." *International Political Science Review* 22 (4): 321–338. DOI: 10.1177/0192512101022004003.
- Ayoade, J. (1998). What is democracy, in: Ayoade, John (ed.), *Democracy: Its Meaning & Value*, Ibadan: Vintage Publishers Ltd, 1–17.
- Barkan, J, (2013). Kenya's 2013 Elections: Technology is Not democracy, in *Journal of Democracy*, 24, 3, 156–165.

- Babayo S, Umar A. Usman Sambo U. Sambo, (2020). The 2019 General Election in Nigeria: Examining the Issues, Challenges, Successes and Lessons for Future General Elections.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344179265_The_2019_General_Election_in_Nigeria_Examining_the_Issues_Challenges_Successes_and_Lessons_for_Future_General_Elections.
- BBC News, (2020). U.S. election 2020: Donald Trump's speech fact-checked.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-54837926>
- BBC [2020]. Poland's Duda narrowly beats Trzaskowski in presidential vote.
- Brian J. F., Jessica C, Patricia F. G, David C K., Eric C V. (2015) News attention to voter fraud in the 2008 and 2012 U.S. elections.
- Bratton, M., & Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2016). Do trustworthy institutions matter for development? Corruption, trust, and government performance in Africa. Afrobarometer.
Retrieved the 20th of April, 2019, from
http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r6_dispatchno112_trustworthy_institutions_and_development_in_africa.pdf
- Business Day (2019). [https://business day. Ng>ng election Centre for Law Enforcement and Education](https://businessday.ng/election/Centre-for-Law-Enforcement-and-Education).
- Campbell. J, (2019). Tribunal Upholds 2019 Nigerian Election While NGO Report Condemns Electoral Body. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/tribunal-upholds-2019-nigerian-election-while-ngo-report-condemns-electoral-body>
- CLEEN, (2019). In Onyeji E. (2019) Killings, ballot box snatching among security lapses witnessed in March 9thelection–report. Pp. 1-5.
- Cheeseman, N, Gabrielle N, & Willis, J. 2018. Digital Dilemmas: The Unintended Consequences of Election Technology, in Democratisation, 25, 8, 1397–1418.

- Danbatta, U. (2017). *Getting Out of the Woods: Diversifying the Nigeria's Economy Through Telecommunications Sector*, the 23rd Professorial Inaugural Lecture of Bayero University, Kano (BUK), delivered by Prof. Umar Danbatta at Bayero University, Kano, the 2nd of November.
- Downs, A. (1957). *An economic Theory of Democracy*. New York, Harper Collins Publishers.
- Drew DeSilver (2021). Turnout soared in 2020 as nearly two-thirds of eligible U.S. voters cast ballots for President. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/28/turnout-soared-in-2020-as-nearly-two-thirds-of-eligible-u-s-voters-cast-ballots-for-president/>
- Effah, J.& Debrah, E. (2018), Biometric Technology for Voter Identification: The Experience in Ghana, in *The Information Society*, 34, 2, 104–113.
- Election Monitor (2015). 2015 General Elections Observation Report, online: [<www.electionmonitorng.blogspot.com.ng/>](http://www.electionmonitorng.blogspot.com.ng/) (5 July 2016).
- Emma. D, Kampelman. M, Robert. H, (2020). Preliminary Findings on The United States General Elections. <https://www.csce.gov/international-impact/osce-election-observers-release-2020-preliminary-findings-united-states-general>.
- Falola, T., & Heaton, M. (2008). *A history of Nigeria*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Farber, H.S. (2009). Rational choice and voter turnout: Evidence from Union Representation Elections. CEPS Working Paper.
- Fabrice Lehoucq cited in Chad Vickery & Erica Shein (2012). *Assessing Electoral Fraud in New Democracies: Refining the Vocabulary*.
- Fatai A, (2020). Smart card readers and the quality of the 2019 general elections in Nigeria: successes and challenges. Published by the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs, retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00358533.2020.1788755> accessed 20/1/2021.
- Fenster M (2008). *Conspiracy theories: Secrecy and power in American culture*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Ghana Web (2020). NDC to challenge results of the 7th of December polls.

Iwuoha V. C, (2019). ICT and Elections in Nigeria: Rural Dynamics of Biometric Voting Technology Adoption. Sage Publisher retrieved from:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/000203971805300304> Accessed 16/02/2021.

Kirkpatrick J. cited in Rafael López-Pintor (2010). Assessing Electoral Fraud in New Democracies A Basic Conceptual Framework. LicenseCC BY 4.0.

Kingston. C, A. Chukwunonyelum, Chukwunonyelum. K, Chinedu I. A. O Chinedu ,

Kwagha, B, and Akpoo, T, (2015). The Analysis of the Use of Smart Card Reader (SCR) and Credible Elections in Nigeria 2015, in International Journal of Political Science and Development, 3, 11, 470–477.

Kabiru, D, Abdulkadir, I, Baba, M. (2017). The Role of Card Reader in Conducting Credible Elections in the 2015 Nigeria's General Election, in International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Review, 7, 2, 187–193.

Larry D. (2008). The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World, New York, NY: Times Books.

Lehoucq, F. (2013). Electoral Fraud: Causes, Types, and Consequences. Annual Review of Political Science Vol. 6:233-256 (Volume publication date June 2003)
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085655>.

Nwogu, G.A.I.(2015) Democracy: Its Meaning and Dissenting Opinions of the Political Class in Nigeria: A Philosophical Approach. Journal of Education and Practice
www.iiste.org. Vol.6, No.4, 2015.

Norris, P. (2016). Why American elections are flawed (and how to fix them). John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 02138
Department of Government and International Relations Merewether Building (HO4), The University of Sydney NSW 2006 Australia

Nwangwu. C, Vincent C. O, & Akanu. O. O, (2018). Elixir of electoral fraud: The impact of digital technology on the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Cogent Social Science

Volume 4, issue 1.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2018.1549007>.

Oguejiofor, O.O (2018). Advancing Electronic Voting Systems in Nigeria's Electoral Process: Legal Challenges and Future Directions.

Ojetunde, D. (2019). 2019 Election: Nigeria has the lowest rate of voter turnout in Africa. International Center for Investigative Reporting (ICIR). Retrieved the 22nd of April, 2019, from <https://www.icirnigeria.org/2019-election-nigeria-has-the-lowest-voter-turnout-in-africa>

Onapajo, H. (2015). Nigeria's 2015 general elections: The salience of electoral reforms. The Round Table, 104 (5), 573–584. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2015.1090795>

Onapajo, H., & Uzodike, U. O. (2014). Rigging through the courts: The judiciary and electoral fraud in Nigeria. Journal of African Elections, 13 (2), 137–168. <https://doi.org/10.20940/JAE/2014/v13i2a7>

Omotola, J.S. (2010). Elections and democratic transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic. African Affairs, Volume 109, Issue 437, October 2010, Pages 535–553, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq040>.

GAI Nwogu 2015. Democracy: Its Meaning and Dissenting Opinions of the Masses.

Pam Sha, Dung (2015). Elite Capture, Institutional Performance and the 2015 National Electoral Outcomes in Nigeria, online: <www.inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Conference-Paper-by-Dung-Pam-Sha1.pdf> (the 29th of September 2017).

Sanni, K. (2019). 626 killed during 2019 Nigeria elections — Report. Premium Times. Retrieved the 1st of July, 2019 <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/343971-626-killed-during-2019-nigeria-elections-report.html>

Subaru, R. (2007). 'Nigeria's Muddled Elections'. *Journal of Democracy* 18 (4).

Transition Monitoring Group (TMG). 1999. Interim Report of the Presidential Elections. Held on Saturday, 27th of February 1999. Available at:
nigeriaworld.com/focus/politics/tmg_report1.html

Sherman. M, (2020). Electoral College makes it official: Biden won, Trump lost.
<https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-270-electoral-college-voted429ef97af2bf574d16463384dc7cc1e>

The Guardian (2015) Why Electronic Voting Isn't Secure—But Maybe Safe Enough, the 27th of February, online: <www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/mar/30/why-electronic-voting-is-not-secure> (the 5th of April 2017). Volume 109, 2020 - Issue 4: Nigeria's 2019 general elections—a shattered hope?

The Guardian News, (2020). U.S. election results 2020: Joe Biden's defeat of Donald Trump.
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2020/dec/08/us-election-results-2020-joe-biden-defeats-donald-trump-to-win-presidency>.

The New York Times (2020). The Electoral College Explained.
<https://www.nytimes.com/article/the-electoral-college.html>.

USAID, (2006). Political Finance in Post-Conflict Societies.

Verjee. A Kwaja, C& Onubogu, O, (2018). Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Change, Continuity, and the Risks to Peace.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep20239?seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents

Washington Post, (2020), Opinion: The very definition of election fraud.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/letters-to-the-editor/the-very-definition-of-election-fraud/2020/11/19/785a8c9e-29b9-11eb-9c21-3cc501d0981f_story.html

World Economic Forum (2019) Mapped: The world's oldest democracies.
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/countries-are-the-worlds-oldest-democracies>.