

Q) Examine the merits and demerits of US election system to elect President. (2017)

1) Introduction:

The US President, arguably the most powerful man on the face of the earth, is elected through a meticulously structured democratic system that ensures public opinion is elicited. Despite ~~is~~ the careful and well-thought election process, it has still been a subject of criticism and controversies. Let's delve deeper into the intricacies of this matter in order to ascertain the ~~flaws~~ flaws in the structure.

2) How is the US President elected:

In order to determine the shortcomings in the election process, it is imperative to know how the process works. Following is an* exhausted description of the process:

2.1) Requirements of being nominated as a Presidential candidate:

The US constitution explicitly stipulates
Maxim.....

the conditions for being a valid presidential candidate. The requirements comprise of three elements: The candidate must be born a citizen of US, He/she must be atleast 35 years old, and have been a resident of US for 14 years.

2.2) Political Parties choose their candidates:

Though candidates can take part in elections independently, they ~~have~~ cannot compete with the candidates chosen by the well-established political parties, such as Democrats.

These parties caucuses are held to select potential presidential aspirants.

2.2.1) What are Primaries:

Primaries are organised by the state or local authorities, where balloting is conducted to choose a presidential candidate.

2.2.2) What are caucuses:

Are organised by political parties to select a candidate.

2.3) Electoral college:

Elections are held on the Tuesday that is after the first Monday of November. Americans vote for people called 'electors', who are supporting their desired presidential candidate. These 'electors' are chose by each party and are ~~not~~ trusted people. These 'electors' ~~combi~~ form electoral college. Each state, proportionate to its size, is allocate certain number of electors; e.g., Texas has 38, and New York has 29. To win the presidential election, a candidate needs $50\% + 1$ electoral votes which is equivalent 270 votes.

2.4) How the Electoral college votes:

Each candidate has his group of electors that form the electoral college. In 48 states and Washington, the winner gets all the votes, meaning if a candidate secures 20 votes in Texas, he will get all 38 votes. Nebraska and Maine, however, follow a different method. called Congressional District Method.

These states allocate 2 electoral votes to the state's popular vote winner and one vote to popular winner. On the off chance that no presidential candidate can secure a majority, a special congress session is convened, where congressmen vote ~~from~~ for the president out of top three candidates.

Candidate has to meet constitutional Requirements

→ Primaries & caucuses for selecting candidate



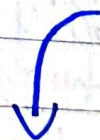
People vote for 'electors' who comprise Electoral college.

← Extensive election campaigns



Electoral college votes for presidential candidates

→ On 6th Jan, joint session is summoned to count the votes



On 20th Jan, President takes Oath

Fig 1: Overview of the Electoral Process.

3) Merits and Demerits of the Electoral process :

3.1) Merits :

3.1.1) Representation to smaller states :

Despite being subjected to severe criticism, the electoral process accords, albeit disproportionate, but adequate representation to all states, including smaller states. This serves as a means to dispell resentment in smaller states for not getting any representation, and also allows them to be a part of national policy formulation, bridging the gulf between large and small federating units.

3.1.2) No Run-off round saves resources and times

Contrary to other countries with presidential form of democratic setup, in USA, there are no run-off rounds held when no presidential candidate is able to secure the majority. In lieu, the congress steps in and votes

for a candidate out of the top three candidates. This not only saves time of a run-off round, but saves invaluable financial resources that could be used in other important matters.

3.1.3) Consolidates America's Political System:

Since USA's inception, ~~that~~ seldom has the electoral process created a mass unrest that ensued in the enfeeblement of democratic system. This particularly electoral system has contributed in solidifying the political setup of the country and has made it one of the strongest and flexible democracies in the world.

3.2) Demerits:

3.2.1) Band wagon effect in Primaries:

States that hold primaries and caucuses first, usually have a major impact on the race. Campaign activity, media attention, and voter

participation are higher in these states. candidates try to build momentum and generate band wagon effect in early primaries. consequently, states that hold caucuses last, have little say in the candidate selection.

3.2.2) Losing of Popular Vote:

The process of ~~majority~~ winner taking all votes stands in stark contrast to the doctrine of popular vote. Merely 50% + 1 votes of the ~~the~~ state do not accord the candidate with 100% votes of a state.

Example: In 2000, Al Gore had 0.5 million votes more than Bush, But Florida's 'winner takes all' system granted Bush crucial addition of votes that eventually led to him winning the elections.

4) Conclusion:

In a nutshell, though extremely well-thought and designed, the electoral process of

US does not go by with some obvious defections and flaws. Although, hitherto, the electoral process has proceeded smoothly with only minor hiccups, this does not guarantee that it will do so in the future. The flaws in the electoral structure have raised eyebrows and will only fuel public dissent as political awareness pervades.

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