



AUTHORITARIAN DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA, 2007 – 2023

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Abstract

The examination of liberal democracy co-existing with competitive authoritarianism in Nigeria relies on Democratic Peace Theory that explains how democratic institutions based on shared institutional frameworks and democratic values ensure peaceful relations. According to the core premise of the Democratic Peace Theory, these regimes stabilize their position through electoral liberalization while providing a measure of satisfaction to the opposition. The research adopts Analytical Design with documentary analysis to collect historical data from tables and media documents using descriptive methods that combine inductive and deductive approaches. The method analyzes several research elements to investigate Nigeria's democratic transformation from 1999 to 2023 specifically targeting both electoral improvements and the absorption of political opposition. Findings reveal that the practice of competitive authoritarianism during the years 2007 under Yar'Adua and 2023 under Tinubu has brought about internal peace through its inclusion of opposition forces in governance by distributing important appointments throughout different political parties. The 2022 Electoral Act along with other electoral reforms expanded voter participation through a large registered voting base yet did not eliminate electoral fraud because authoritarian tendencies remain strong. The hybrid system maintains control through elite balance to prevent anarchic conditions whereas Buhari demonstrated a complete lack of democratic practice during his eight years by rejecting all opposition and using brute military experience to exert force. The study recommends the modification of Nigeria's political/democratic structure to make citizen needs more important than preserving the current regime. A national unity government which includes required opposition participation through designated positions would weaken competitive authoritarianism therefore strengthening authentic democratic societal institutions. The increased number of democracies worldwide since 1975 (from 44 to more than 150 by 2004) does not resolve Nigeria's challenges in creating a democratic system that integrates Western ideals with African communal values because of its complex cultural situation.

Keywords: Democracy, Competitive Authoritarianism, Democratic Peace Theory, Political Development

Introduction

A world-wide war during the 1940s turned the air into an unstable realm that sensed the sounds of damage. The nuclear flames consumed Japan's ancient cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki thus leaving their ashes to spread mutational and sorrowful human experiences across Asian history. War's brutal teeth gnashed through the decade, leaving an indelible mark on history's pages. Meanwhile, the Berlin Wall crumbled into dust, bipolarity unraveled like a frayed thread, and a bold new world order rose from the chaos. The opportunistic United States took the world stage, unrivaled, electrifying, a unipolar titan, wielding diplomacy like a lightning rod to reshape ideologies and topple tyrannies.

With a mission to spread capitalist cathexis, economic liberty, and the gospel of liberal democracy, the U.S. set its sights on nations shackled by authoritarianism, communism, and totalitarianism (Okolie & Nnamani, 2016). This U.S. razzmatazz became a democratic wildfire that swept across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, torturing one-party regimes, military juntas, and despotic strongholds in places like Costa Rica, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, and Ghana (Rose & Shin,



2001; Schenoni & Mainwaring, 2019). By the late 20th century, democracy wasn't just a system, it was a contagion, swelling the ranks of democratic nations from 44 in 1975 to over 150 by 2004 (DeSilver, 2017; Shin, 1994; Huntington, 1991). It unfurled its tentacles, promising governance rooted in the will of the people, yet igniting a fierce tug of war between freedom and control.

Then came Nigeria's turn. In 1999, the country stepped tentatively into the arms of Western democracy, a beacon of hope flickering for its masses. But the shadows of oppression lingered, nowhere more evident than in its elections riddled with fraud, ballot-snatching, underage voting (and yes, even animals casting ballots), vote-buying, and biased umpires (Badejo & Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2015). Nigeria's democratic aspirations withered for twenty years because these electoral malpractices merged like spiderwebs sticky onto the nation's politics. The country has experienced successful regime changes starting from 1999 but democratic consolidation continues to elude the nation becoming a distant goal. Stakeholders clamor for reforms to banish these anti-democratic demons, yet the cure has birthed a twisted side effect which has given rise to competitive authoritarianism.

Here's the twist, those steering this hybrid beast have mastered a cunning art. From 2007, when President Musa Yar'Adua took office vowing to loosen electoral chokeholds and soothe the opposition, Nigeria's rulers learned to stretch political outcomes just enough to keep the peace while tightening their grip. It's a delicate dance, balancing liberty with control, private property with communal roots; a clash of Western ideals against Africa's deep-seated values of collective security (Osaghae, 1999).

The core difference emerged that Western democracy involves values that present private property and individual rights while in Africa communalism shapes their security orientation (Osaghae, 1999). To many African scholars, liberal democracy feels like a foreign transplant, a neo-imperial relic of colonial rule. Fusing it with Africa's vibrant, pluralistic cultures has proven a Herculean task. Thinkers like Powell Jr. (2000, p. 23), Ake (1996 & 2000), Adagbabiri (2015), Ibrahim (2003), Adediran (2015), Ugwueze (2021), and Eke (2005, p. 163) argue it's less a gift of modernization and more a Pandora's box, unleashing political chaos, ethnic rifts, and religious divides. In Nigeria, over three decades of wrestling with this imported system have yielded not prosperity but economic stagnation, corruption, and crime. Multiparty elections, meant to heal insecurity and underdevelopment, have instead fanned their flames. Thus, Competitive authoritarianism isn't just a footnote here, it's the spine of Nigeria's democratic story.

Evidence shows that Nigerian elections often spiral into violence and malpractice, especially when an opposition threatens the incumbent's throne (Joseph, 1987; Osaghae, 1999; Iwu, 2008). The ruling party might unleash terror, militant groups, religious zealots, courtroom marathons, propaganda, bombings, assassinations, youth unrest, and kidnappings; all to cling to power (Onimode, 2007; Ake, 2000; Ayeni, 2010). In this crucible, liberal democracy and competitive authoritarianism are locked in an uneasy embrace, each shaping Nigeria's political destiny.

Yet amid the critiques from scholars like Powell Jr (2000, pg. 23), Ake (1996 & 2000), Adagbabiri (2015), Ibrahim (2003), Adediran (2015), Ugwueze (2021), Eke (2005, P.163) among others, a gap persists. Few have explored how this authoritarian streak, through sly liberalization of political



outcomes, has kept Nigeria from tipping into outright chaos. This study dives into that breach, probing how this paradoxical system sustains a fragile peace; and what it means for political development in a land where democracy and despotism walk hand in hand.

The Enigmatic Dance of Power: Unraveling Competitive Authoritarianism

In the captivating world of political regimes, competitive authoritarianism emerges as a paradoxical spectacle a masquerade of democracy where the trappings of freedom are artfully undermined by those already in power. Levitsky and Way (2010, pp. 5–12) explains how authoritarian systems emulate democratic characteristics like elections and parliaments but the dominant political class skillfully transforms these democratic elements into powerless facades. The heartbeat of democracy known as elections turns into a ritual of control which the ruling elite uses to maintain their power. They are at once meaningless, a ritual devoid of true stakes, and yet tantalizingly meaningful, offering the opposition a faint glimmer of hope a theoretical chance to triumph, overshadowed by the practical certainty of defeat. At its core, competitive authoritarianism reveals an autocratic soul, perpetually tilting the scales in favor of the incumbents.

This phenomenon has woven itself into the fabric of democracy in developing nations, emerging as an inescapable shadow and a cunning substitute for outright authoritarianism. Levitsky and Way (2002) spotlight its defining traits: the selection of national leaders, though cloaked in competitiveness, is deftly manipulated to ensure the incumbent's grip on power whether directly or through proxies. These regimes thrive when the ruling class commands the electoral process, rendering it a well-oiled machine of continuity; yet, they falter in their efficiency when periodic elections crack open a window for opposition to challenge the status quo. Political change, then, teeters on a knife's edge ever possible, yet rarely achieved (Levitsky and Way 2010a, 15).

While many scholars and media voices decry competitive authoritarianism as a sly instrument of oppression a velvet glove concealing an iron fist, a daring few propose a counterintuitive twist. They suggest that this hybrid regime, though a tool of the powerful, might paradoxically fertilize the soil of political and democratic growth. Competition, they argue, ignites ambition, fueling a contest for power that could, in rare instances, invigorate a system. Yet, Levitsky and Way, echoing Andreas Schedler, caution that Most hybrid regimes disregard minimal democratic standards to such an extent that researchers should stop considering them democracies (cited in Levitsky and Way 2010a, 15). True democracy, they insist, hinges on elections that are not just competitive but genuinely meaningful free from the incumbent's sleight of hand (Cameron et al. 2018).

A chorus of intellectual heavyweights like; Ballard (2007, p. 11), Blades (2008), Southall and Daniel (2005), Larry Diamond (2017), Linz (2019, p. 23), Agbaje and Adejumbi (2016), and Levitsky and Way (2002) rally behind this critique, branding competitive authoritarianism a blight on democracy. To them, it's a cunning manipulation, an infestation that corrodes the legitimacy of a system meant to be sanctified by the rule of law. Yet, a rival choir sings a different tune. Scholars like Gandhi and Okar (2009), Magaloni (2008), Moreh (2015), Rhoden (2015), Cameron et al. (2018), Hugo Maduro (2013), Matt (2012, p. 377), Vande Walle (2012, p. 172), and Andrea and



Giovanni (2020) don't dispute its flaws but reframe its essence. Far from a betrayal of liberal democracy, they see competitive authoritarianism as an inevitable thread in the tapestry of governance a natural extension of a leader's influence over the state. A powerless leader, they contend, begets a powerless nation.

Amid this scholarly tug-of-war, a fresh perspective beckon. This research dares to explore an untold story of how competitive authoritarianism might, against the odds, liberalize electoral outcomes in Nigeria. While the global discourse wrestles with its implications, Nigeria's democratic journey offers a unique lens a narrative rarely probed in depth. By juxtaposing these dynamics, this study promises to unearth compelling reasons why this hybrid regime, for all its flaws, may hold unexpected keys to unlocking political evolution in the Nigerian context.

Theoretical Perspective

The Democratic Peace Theory came into being through the visionary 1795 Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch by Immanuel Kant. In his treatise, Kant delineated that states can maintain peaceful relations through a lawful republican system of government (Kant, 1795). This thought-provoking opening concept set off a chain reaction which lit up the academic course for many scholars to follow.

The following analysts joined Russett (1993) and Owen (1994) along with Deudney (2007), Hegre (2014) and Doyle (2017, pp. 503–533) to elaborate further on Kant's groundbreaking concepts. The proponents of Democratic Peace Theory effectively stated that liberal and republican democracies avoid engaging in armed conflicts with their democratic counterparts. A group of scholars supported by advocates developed their additional insights after following Kant's original theory, suggesting that a symphony of factors shared values, institutional checks, and economic interdependence composes the melody of peace among democratic nations.

The basic assumptions of the Democratic peace theory are itemized as follows:

- Democratic peace theory believes that democracy should stand as a legacy and institution of representative government, showering the people with their desired will and expectations. This system of representation should as well be able to hold elected public officials, electoral bodies and decision-making bodies accountable and responsible to the wide electorate, this would make even a looming war hugely unacceptable and unwanted choice for both the state and its citizens.
- The Democratic Peace Theory holds believes that republican states are unlikely to go to war with one-another than the non-republican states.
- Democracies that share democratic principles with structures of liberal values function in peace. Because shared liberal principles serve as the best way to explain the peaceful coexistence of democratic nations.
- The theory believes that declaring war in democratic states require support from the citizen and legislative approval.



- It stipulates that even when an illiberal leader ascends power, institutions like the electoral commission, political pluralism, competitive elections, freedom of speech, and liberal reforms will make it impossible for the head of the state to persuade the public to engage in war.
- Democratic Peace Theory places no assumption on the fact that all elected representatives, political activists and citizens must be liberal-minded, instead it advocates that democratic institutions which provide citizens with the leverage over state policy will eventually make it unlikely that the leader in such democratic structure will initiate a war with another liberal democratic state.
- According to democratic peace theorists, nations that develop long-term economic relationships gain access to average opportunity-cost opportunities through diplomatic cooperation rather than military force which gives states stable funding channels for extracting territorial resources thus making such relationships more enduring than military interventions.

In application, Democratic Peace Theory pirouettes gracefully into the spotlight, illuminating the argument that competitive authoritarianism; a delicate balance where incumbents share morsels of power like appointments, positions, and contracts; serves as a choreography to appease opposition and secure support for a second term. According to the theory liberal democratic reforms that produce competitive authoritarianism transform the system into a mechanism that calms dissent and oppositions, establishes domestic harmony and stabilizes political regimes.

The mechanism behind competitive authoritarianism exhibits a surprising contradiction by favoring existing officials but simultaneously prompting opposition parties to participate which results in preservation of peaceful conditions and promotes electoral trends toward liberalization. This theory of harmony will be examined using two essential variables as the foundation for our study.

- Struggle for control and appointment across political parties
- The participatory inducement through electoral reforms.

Struggle For Control and Appointment Across Political Parties

The active role of opposition parties in democratic governance and hegemonic forces that shape elections serve as the colorful indicator of election authenticity during national votes. This complex relationship evaluates how accurately democratic institutions function by revealing the extent of voting opportunities in a political system. Ballard (2007:11) states in his own words that opposition party space and democratic openness align to present a systemic health assessment. Information exploitation and the tactical positioning of dissident figures act as stealth approaches to opposition control instead of using physical force to reduce citizen opposition through deceitful methods.

Two uncompromised competitors occupy a massive field of fair competition that gives them each complete access to win the top position while using all potential resources. This contest hums with



energy until one rival emerges not as an equal, but as a towering authority over the other. The concept of competitive authoritarianism emerges as a democratic system that many consider to be an improper deviation from democratic norms. The leader maintains power against an underpowered challenger using calculated political technique. Research shifts prevailing opinion to present competitive authoritarianism in Nigeria as a system which ensures democratic survival while simultaneously establishing internal unity among regime factions. Present-day incumbent officeholders avoid violent second-term campaigns by establishing executive power networks which absorb political opposition representatives from different social groups (Elliot Bulmer, 2021).

The various distinct populations of Nigeria use the minority status defense as their protective shield. Such groups attain enhanced representation when proportional electoral systems are implemented because they help create a more complex party system (Bulmer, 2021). Since the civilian transition of 1999 that presented democracy to the world the power struggle between political factions primarily uses this strategic method of absorption to gain dominance. The time span from 2007 to 2023 serves as a noteworthy historical segment for Nigeria through which authoritarian democracy pushed the boundaries with manipulative practices that led people to question their democratic beliefs. The tables and graphs that follow illuminate this saga, painting a vivid portrait of a nation in flux.

Table 1

2007 DATA: Ruling Party: People's Democratic Party (PDP)

PRESIDENT	TENURE/ YEARS IN OFFICE	OPPOSITION'S APPOINTMENT	APPOINTED OPPOSITION'S NAME	APPOINTED OPPOSITION'S PARTY
Umaru- Musa- Yar-Adua	29 th May 2007 – 5 th May 2010 (Died In Office)	<i>Defence Minister</i>	<i>Shettima Mustapha</i>	<i>All-Nigeria People's Party (ANPP)</i>
		<i>Health Minister</i>	<i>Babatunde Osotimehin</i>	<i>No party before appointment</i>
		<i>Environment and Housing Minister</i>	<i>Halima Tayo Alao</i>	<i>Progressive People's Alliance (PPA)</i>
		<i>Justice (Attorney General)</i>	<i>Michael Aondoakaa</i>	<i>No Political Affiliation</i>
		<i>Information and Communication Minister</i>	<i>Dora Akunyili</i>	<i>All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)</i>

Note. African News. 27 July 2007 "Yar'Adua names cabinet". Retrieved from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_President_Umaru_Yar%27Adua



The 2007 data above reveal that out of the 37 cabinet members announced by the president Umaru Musa Yar'adua only five ministerial positions were given to the opposition. This was because the democratic system of 2007 saw P.D.P as the dominant faction in Nigeria. Majority of prominent elites dominated and carried the party's flag across the 36 states in the country. There was less competition among the parties. Nonetheless, in 5th May 2010 Yar'adua was reported dead and Goodluck Ebele Jonathan his vice president was sworn in. He equally appointed his cabinets thus:

Table 2

2010 Data: Ruling Party: People's Democratic Party (PDP)

PRESIDENT	TENURE/ YEARS IN OFFICE	OPPOSITION'S APPOINTMENT	APPOINTED OPPOSITION'S NAME	APPOINTED OPPOSITION'S PARTY
GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN	6 TH MAY 2010 – 29 th May 2015	<i>Education Minister</i>	Prof. (Mrs) Ruqayyah Ahmed Rufa'i	<i>Split PDP and joined new party (APC)</i>
		<i>Information Minister</i>	Labaran Maku	<i>All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)</i>
		<i>Finance Minister</i>	Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	<i>Technocrat</i>
		<i>Minister of Power</i>	Osita Nebo	<i>No party before appointment</i>
		<i>Information and Communication Minister</i>	Dora Akunyili	<i>All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)</i>
		<i>Foreign Affairs Minister (state) Minister of Transport</i>	Prof. Viola Onwuliri Idris A.Umar	<i>Technocrat Decamped to All Progressive Congress (APC)</i>

Note. Sahara Reporters, April 5, 2010 "full list of new ministers – Jonathan to take charge of power; Dora Akunyili back as minister of information and communication"

Link: <https://saharareporters.com/2010/04/05/full-list-new-ministers-jonathan-take-charge-power-dora-akunyili-back-minister>



From 2007 to 2015, i.e. between Yar-adua and Goodluck Jonathan it can be vividly recorded that incumbent presidents have remained faithful to this game in order to pull support and voters for their subsequent tenure, thereby enhancing liberal democracy. These incumbents have either won the game or lost it as in the case of Goodluck Jonathan who lost after his tactical application of competitive authoritarianism. It could be seen that the tactical display of using technocrats by president Jonathan and non-party members to form his cabinet exemplified competitive authoritarianism this was done to placate the opposition meanwhile, knowing the electoral power of the northern part of Nigeria he stretched wide to accommodate them in his economic and political policies, yet he lost and the elites/minorities in the north won. This also gave room for another political party to emerge in the executive position.

2015 ANALYSIS:

In 2015 the All Progressive Congress (APC) arose with Muhammadu Buhari as its flag national bearer. The Buhari regime became an exception, it rather stiffened the democratic formation and widened the autocratic leverage; thus, little trace of competitive authoritarianism was recorded in his regime rather democracy was bastardized and brute military force deployed. Buhari was less concerned about the perception of democracy under his control. Therefore his cabinet was made up of his party members and cabals that maneuvered him into power. Thus 2015 to 2023 was a terror to competitive authoritarian practice and an eyesore to democracy. Further exemplification can be found in website of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) which stated thus:

Military together with SSS which serves as an equivalent to both FBI and secret police directed attacks against judicial, media and National Assembly institutions alongside protest-activists recurrently. The State Security Service grabbed became naughty and notorious by holding journalist Omoyele Sowore as an arrestee even after his initial release because he returned to Nigeria to organize protests and he is a former presidential candidate and human rights activist who currently resides in the U.S. After being released from arrest in December SSS agents overpowered him inside the courtroom until the fleeing judge returned to her chambers. The courts have released Sowore on bail while he stands accused of treason as well as money laundering and cyberstalking offenses. Recent events involving Sowore have demonstrated Nigeria's continuing authoritarian evolution. Security services conducted a raid on an esteemed newspaper facility one year back after military Boko Haram fight reports emerged thus kidnapping journalists at the scene. In 2018 Security and Safety Services operatives wearing masks surrounded the National Assembly building which opposition lawmakers interpreted as a tactic to scare their colleagues. The SSS blockaded the National Assembly but the 'acting-president' in the person of Vice President Yemi Osinbajo fired the SSS leader even though he did not clarify who authorized the security operation.

Furthermore, CFR publication further stated that religious and ethnic groups were affected by Major Buhari's recall of authoritarian rule:

The governing authorities specifically pursue dispute-prone ethnic and religious communities as part of their focus. Ibrahim el-Zakzaky faces federal detention following an arrest in late 2015 due to Nigerian military allegations of an IMN attempt on the chief of army staff which led to the death of 350 IMN members. Human Rights Watch



documents at least one hundred deaths that occurred during different security crackdowns following initial incidents. Due to security service raids on his house in 2017 Nnamdi Kanu the IPOB leader who heads the Igbo Indigenous Peoples of Biafra fled internationally. Buhari's administration considers both religious organizations terrorist entities while they display no history of terrorism activities (Campbell, 2020).

When Buhari regime elapsed, in 2023 Bola Ahmed Tinubu took the mantle of power, he announced his 45 ministers that surprisingly contained the opposition party. He included the major representative of his opposition party; Governor Wike of the People's Democratic Party who he appointed as minister of Federal Capital Territory among others. Below are his appointees.

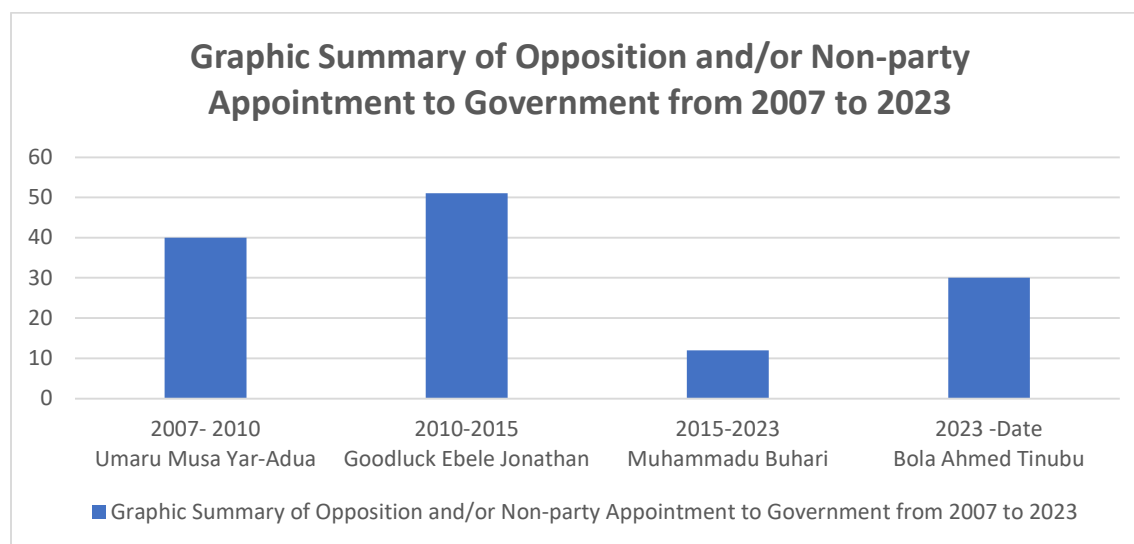
Table 3
2023 Data, Ruling Party: All Progressives Congress (APC)

NAME OF PRESIDENT	TENURE/ YEARS IN OFFICE	OPPOSITION'S APPOINTMENT	APPOINTED OPPOSITION'S NAME	APPOINTED OPPOSITION'S PARTY
BOLA AHMED TINUBU	29 TH MAY 2023 – DATE	Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Minister of the FCT	Bosun Tijani Nyesom Wike	No party. (media critic during tinubu's electoral campaign) Visit: https://www.thecable.ng/lesson-from-the-bosun-tijani-saga People's Democratic Party (PDP)

Note. Oluwatobi Aworinde, August 16 2023, Channels TV Online.

Link: <https://www.channelstv.com/2023/08/16/full-list-of-ministers-and-portfolios/>

Figure 1.0





Note. Adapted from Media Reports like:

* *African News*. 27 July 2007 "Yar'Adua names cabinet" Link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_President_Umaru_Yar%27Adua

* Sahara Reporters, April 5, 2010 "full list of new ministers – Jonathan to take charge of power; Dora Akunyili back as minister of information and communication"

Link: <https://saharareporters.com/2010/04/05/full-list-new-ministers-jonathan-take-charge-power-dora-akunyili-back-minister>

* John Campbell, January 15, 2020. "Nigeria's Slide toward Authoritarianism" Link: <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/nigerias-slide-toward-authoritarianism>

* Oluwatobi Aworinde, August 16 2023, Channels TV Online.

Link: <https://www.channelstv.com/2023/08/16/full-list-of-ministers-and-portfolios/>

From the above figure 1.0, we could find out that the Umaru Musa Yaradua administration involved both party member and non-party member in their political administration, his administration advocated for the reception of the opposition in politics, thus the reason for 40% in the above figure.

The Goodluck regime worked with technocrats, non-party members and educated elites these people made up his cabinet and were specialized professionals in the area in which they were appointed, thus his regime did not just look at party members but capable hands that could execute a policy irrespective of party thus the reason for his rapid growth to 51% in figure 1.0.

The Buhari regime had little or nothing to do with non-party members. Perhaps his military background armed him with both subtle and brute dictatorship which he used in protecting his regime. Buhari needed no opposition to secure his tenure, he believed that his use of brute military experience could secure his position as incumbent thus, the reason for a rapid decline in competitive authoritarianism in his regime to only 12% in the above chart.

The Tinubu administration, presents opposition participation, including his media critic. As of 2023, his appointments have reflected the use of oppositions which tentatively gave rise to his 30% in the chart. Nonetheless, it becomes pertinent to note the systemic use of technocrats in the earlier appointments of 2007 – 2015 becomes subjective and non-reflective in the present day democracy. The major concern of this neo-democracy is the system of placating the opposition to maintain internal peace.

Participatory Inducement Through Electoral Reform

Most authoritarian democracy exist from the avalanche of procreating a neo-formation for democracy, it has thus become an object in procession of the elites who bicker over the quest to remain in power. From the western political orientation, Africa has become the center of political dungeon exemplified by the stagnation of attempted democracy (Aba, 2021). Over the years scholars and authors have been left with no choice but to deduce that electoral history of the country is characterized by consistent 'electoral fraud and competitive rigging' (Ibrahim 2007, pp 2, 3). It has become a national trend and has continued systematically and most remarkably



especially the 2007 general elections, which was remarkable for its democratic fraud because of the concocted results which took place in areas where there was actually no voting.

Table 4

2007 Election Statistical Information:

TOTAL	35,397,517	100.00
Registered voters	61,567,036	—
Total Votes (Voter Turnout)	Not Available	(approx. 58%)
Invalid/Blank Votes	Not Available	—
Total Valid Votes	35,397,517	—

Note. African Elections Database

See: https://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html#2007_Presidential_Election

To further problematize the table above; according to Cable News (October 24, 2018) reports that on April 21, 2017 Nigeria became the country to document its first presidential election without state-specific results or an official list of election data. INEC Chairman Maurice Iwu announced the PDP candidate Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as national election winner with the absurd vote count of 24,638,063 votes. His announcement provided no details and breakdown regarding the results.

Journalists and poll analysts have been seeking the 2017 election breakdown since it was conducted due to tracking voting patterns yet this information remains unavailable to date. The cable news journalists decided to submit 'freedom of information requests' to INEC for the state-level analysis and results of the 2007 presidential vote. It is dreadful to discover that the acting Secretary of INEC, Okechukwu Ndeche, personally signed a response to Cable News saying the Electoral body lacks possession of requested information. Information about the 2007 presidential election results is accessible through contact with INEC state offices found throughout the 36 states and FCT.

Many economic political social variables play key determining roles for election sincerity levels and the way voters participate (Mozaffer & Schedler 2002, p 6). The reform of electoral procedures in Nigeria needs to motivate more voters to vote but it keeps the precise same problematic system as it currently stands. Competitive rigging describes this historical phenomenon (Ibrahim 2007, pp 2-3). Electoral reform proposals presenting themselves for presidential assent typically need amendments to the Nigerian constitution. The revision of the Electoral Act 2006 and 2010 mandated new amendments which enabled sequencing of elections and forbid candidates from crossing party lines since elected officials needed to lose their seat before running again.



Table 5
2011 Election Statistical Information

ELECTION PARTICIPATORY DETAILS	FIGURES /DATES
Presidential and National Assembly elections	April 16, 2011
States	36 States plus the Federal Capital
Local Government Areas (LGAs)	774 Local Government Areas
Total no. of Registered Voters	73,528,040 (Seventy-Three Million, Five Hundred and Twenty-Eight Thousand and Forty)
Registration areas/wards	7,003
Polling units	128,892
Total Number of Valid Votes	38,209,978

Note. The Compendium of INEC, 2011

Table 6
Major Electoral Amendments/changes in the Electoral Act 2010 as it reflects on the Electoral Act of 2022

S/N	Initial Stipulations under Electoral Act 2010	Modifications of the Electoral Act 2022
1.	According to INEC guidelines ALL electoral funds will be distributed at prescribed times	The bill states that electoral funds must be released one year before any upcoming election date (Section 3(3)).
2.	Political parties must submit their candidate lists ahead of the election date no less than 60 days before voting takes place.	Section 29 (1) stipulates that political parties need to conduct primary elections and submit their nominee candidates at least 180 days prior to election day.
3.	The system operated without proper legal permission for both electronic voting methods and electronic results transmission functions.	The legal provisions outlined in Section 47 & 50 (2) allow technology to accredit voters and transmit election results electronically while Section 62 (2) enables INEC to operate an electronic voter register.
4.	Political appointees gained the right to participate in political party primary elections through voting and seeking election	The voting right and aspirant qualification is forbidden to political appointees according to Section 84 (12)



5. The election framework failed to establish sufficient assistance methods for voters who have physical disabilities and vulnerable groups during voting time. The law in Section 54 (2) allows disabled voters and vulnerable individuals to select anyone who will help them vote at the polling station while INEC provides needed assistance features at these polling sites.
6. The case of over-voting could be identified through the number of registered voters. Section 54 establishes accredited voters as the sole measure to identify over-voting situations
7. The law failed to address how results declared by returning officers under pressure should be handled According to Section 65 INEC possesses the power to review declarations made by returning officers when they made their announcement under duress or when it goes against election guidelines and laws during a seven-day period..
8. Political parties had to conduct political campaigns during a 90-day period before each election date. Electoral campaigns according to Section 94 now have a 150-day starting period that ends 24 hours before the election date
9. The electoral act failed to provide measures for candidate death either before an election starts or during an election process and exclusively allowed the commission to delay upcoming elections In accordance with Section 34 INEC must halt ongoing elections following candidate death through death. The electoral agency then needs fourteen days to establish a new polling day. INEC must postpone voting operations for maximum 21 days when the candidate passes away after election voting begins but before result announcements. After candidate demise the party must organize a new primary election within fourteen days unless the late candidate occupied the presidential position or governorship office or even FCT Area Council position where successor running mates can continue and select a replacement.
10. The public has legal power to request court assessment of candidates who make false declarations or use fraudulent identification. According to section 29 (5) the judicial review process can only be accessed by competitors whose names appeared in the primary contest against the candidate whose information or certificates need examination.
11. None of the necessary arrangements were included to ensure INEC personnel would stay impartial during the election period and there were no specified penalties when these rules were violated. All personnel including ad hoc workers within INEC must maintain non-partisanship and neutrality according to Section 8 (5) of the Electoral Act. A penalty of five million Nairas combined with potential imprisonment of two years is the legal consequence.



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| 12. The Electoral Act of 2010 established just one national collation center yet to handle presidential election results. | A presidential election state collection facility is allowed under Section 27 of the Nigerian Constitution. |
| 13. A previous 6-month deadline exists for political party registration before general elections | According to Section 75 (1) INEC must approve political party registration only if the application comes in before the general election year. |
| 14. Election campaigning for political candidates will have reduced financial limits which I have specified below:
- Presidential – 1, 000,000, 000 naira
- Governorship – 200,000, 000 naira
- Senatorial – 40, 000,000 naira
- House of Representatives – 20,000, 000 naira
- State Assembly – 10,000, 000 naira
- Chairmanship – 10,000, 000 naira
- Councillorship – 1,000, 000 naira | Section 88 (2-7) raised the maximum election spending caps on political campaign expenses by political candidates through the following limits:
- Presidential – 5, 000, 000, 000 naira
- Governorship – 1, 000, 000, 000 naira
- Senatorial – 100, 000, 000 naira
- House of Representatives – 70, 000, 000 naira
- State Assembly – 30, 000, 000 naira
- Chairmanship – 30, 000, 000 naira
- Councillorship – 5, 000, 000 naira |

Note. Adapted from Electoral Act 2010 and Electoral Act 2022, (as amended).

The president granted his authorization for the Electoral Act 2022 which passed through the parliamentary process on February 25, 2022. The Electoral Act 2022 included solutions to address all critical issues found in the Electoral Act of 2010. According to the newly passed Electoral Act various criteria have been put in place to organize the 2023 general elections. Which is a reason the European Union (2022: 1) stated that the Electoral Act 2022 contains separate and precise procedures designed to advance the electoral system (2022: 1). Most of the provisions from the Electoral Act 2010 receive substitute definitions under this enactment. This legislative product emerged through combined input from civil society organizations and judgments from past elections as well as INEC involvement and recommendations from reliable election observers. The Electoral Act 2022 provided INEC with authority to utilize technological tools in modern elections while directing early fund disbursement to INEC for pre-election years and installing better result transmission mechanisms and a valid basis for INEC to revoke results obtained under force (EU, 2022).

The latest reform addition allows support services for persons with disabilities as well as other vulnerable groups to facilitate their participation in the electoral system. Implementing accredited voter counts instead of registered voter counts to determine over-voting will break down the widespread presence of ghost and foreign voters. In a well-grounded assessment Abati (2022) states that “Since the decision to establish a trustworthy electoral framework for elections and leadership selection, the National Assembly made the most thorough and practical amendment of the Electoral Act 2010 (also known as the Electoral Act 2022).” Despite all positive eventuality, we must answer whether the updated electoral framework advanced the voting results across Nigeria during 2023.



Table 7
2023 Election Statistical Information

ELECTION PARTICIPATORY DETAILS	FIGURES /DATES	PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE
National Assembly and Presidential elections	February 25, 2023	
State-Houses of Assembly and Gubernatorial elections	March 18, 2023	
States	The Federal Capital Territory and 36 States	
Local Government Areas (LGAs)	774 LGAs	
Total no. of Registered Voters	93,469,008 (Ninety-Three Million, Four Hundred and Nine Thousand and Eight)	100 Percent
Male	49,054,162	52.5 percent
Female	44,414,846	47.5 percent
Persons with disabilities	85,362 (data from the 2021–22 registration exercise)	10.6 Percent
Youth (aged 18–34) years	37,060,399	39.65%
Wards and areas for Registration	8,809	
Election points and Polling areas	176,846	
Total Number of Valid Votes	24,025,940	

Note. The Compendium of INEC, 2023 (Computation into percentage was made by the researcher).

Table 8
General Election Statistics

	Total Registered Voters	Total Polling Units	Total Valid Votes
2011 Electoral Participation	73,528,040	128,892	38,209,978
2015 Electoral participation	67,422,005	100,088	28,587,564
2023 Electoral participation	93,469,008	176,846	24,025,940

Note. The Compendium of INEC; (2011), (2015), (2023). Compiled by the Researcher.



Placing side by side the voters' participation as influenced by the 2010 reform, 2015 amendment of 2010 reform and the 2022 electoral reform in the 2011, 2015 and 2023 elections respectively which is evident in the table above. One can deduce that the electoral reform of 2022 posed more hope for the citizens. These reforms induce participation among the citizens who have long hoped for equal playing field in the political terrain, decrying the eminence of competitive authoritarianism. From the above table it is possible to state that political participation increased in the 2023 election due to the new electoral reform.

Conclusion

In the vibrant theater of Nigeria's political landscape, this study unveils a compelling narrative: which is that competitive authoritarianism reigns supreme, where incumbent powers masterfully appease opposition forces to cling to their thrones. Far from chaos, this intricate dance fosters an unexpected harmony and internal peace among the elite class, delicately balancing ambition and stability. Despite the fact that Powell (2000) unveiled that democratic authoritarianism works to change democratic election tools and institutions into authoritarian methods that violate their basic democratic functions. Both Ghandi and Okar (2009) explain through their research how authoritarian systems offer autocratic leaders valuable means to firmly establish their domination by using elections to preserve their political rule.

The governance illusion according to Ghandi and Przeworski (2006) depends on dictatorial manipulation which turns political elites, oligarchs, pressure groups and party loyalists into one united network of collaborators. The authoritarian system uses elections as a ceremonial platform where leaders from the ruling group allocate power and regenerate their connections among elite members to advance their self-interested governorship. Magaloni (2008) introduces an explanation about power by observing how elite transitions between rulers follow a consistent pattern to make ordered political environments but reinforce authoritarian control.

Yet, the plot thickens. Levitsky and Way (2010, p. 15), echoing Andreas Schedler, pierce through the façade, declaring that many regimes especially in developing nations trample democratic norms so flagrantly that labeling them democracies, however qualified, feels absurd. Competitive authoritarianism muddies these waters further, blurring the line between genuine democracy and its hollow imitation. What does "severe violation" truly mean when elections however flawed still occur? As Cameron et al. (2018) remind us, the litmus test of democracy lies not in the mere act of voting but in whether the competition is real, meaningful, and vibrant not just a glittering mirage.

In Nigeria, the dream of pure democracy hinges on the state's ability to pirouette power across a kaleidoscope of parties PDP, APC, ACN, APGA, ANPP, LP, and beyond reflecting political liberalization and dynamism. A single dominant party can suffocate system vitality because its dominance stems from controlling all political power opportunities. The PDP maintained the top seat from 1999 to 2014 before the 2022 Electoral Act triggered a three-way transformation of political leadership. The 2023 elections, though still marred by corruption and malpractice, shimmered with unprecedented competitiveness. Parties like NPP, APC, PDP, and LP clashed in a



fierce contest, and for the first time, a faint silhouette of democracy emerged a fragile yet hopeful step beyond the stranglehold of authoritarian echoes.

Finding & Recommendation

Finding

On the bases of the conclusion, we stated the following finding.

- That through its Competitive Authoritarian political system, Nigeria has experienced electoral outcome freedom as a means to shield the ruling government

Recommendation

The results obtained from this research lead to the following proposed recommendation:

1. The Nigerian Government should initiate a political structure that will result in the protection of the interest of all its citizens and not just the regime in power. This can be done by:
 - Making a government of national unity a cardinal requirement in Nigeria's democracy
 - Allocating certain percentage of political offices/appointments to opposition parties.

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