

# ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)



**ISRG PUBLISHERS**

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

**ISSN: 2583-7672 (Online)**

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjahss>

Volume – IV Issue - II (March – April) 2026

Frequency: Bimonthly



## DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING AND EXECUTIVE POWER CONSOLIDATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND HUNGARY (2010–2024)

Ajiteru Sherif Abdul Raheem (Ph.D)<sup>1\*</sup>, Enyioko Ikechukwu Jacinta (Ph.D)<sup>2</sup>, Bayefine Onaiyekan Robert<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science and International Relations Achievers University Owo Ondo State Nigeria. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8793-062x

<sup>2</sup> Department of Political Science, and Public Administration, Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. ORCID ID: 0009-0006-3127-2502

<sup>3</sup> Post Graduate Student, Political Science, Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

| **Received:** 28.02.2026 | **Accepted:** 05.03.2026 | **Published:** 08.03.2026

\*Corresponding author: Ajiteru Sherif Abdul Raheem (Ph.D)

### Abstract

*This study examines democratic backsliding and executive power consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024 within a comparative analytical framework. Drawing on democratic theory and contemporary scholarship on executive aggrandizement, the research investigates how elected governments expand authority while maintaining formal democratic structures. A mixed-methods design was adopted, integrating qualitative data from 20 purposively selected experts and quantitative longitudinal data from the Varieties of Democracy Institute, Freedom House, and the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index. Descriptive findings indicate a grand mean of 3.78 (SD = 1.09), reflecting moderate-to-high perceived democratic erosion across rule of law, media freedom, legislative autonomy, civil society space, and electoral integrity. Media freedom recorded the highest perceived decline (M = 3.88), followed by executive-legislative imbalance (M = 3.82). Multiple regression analysis demonstrates that executive dominance significantly predicts democratic health ( $R^2 = 0.677$ ;  $F = 23.450$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), explaining 67.7% of variance in institutional performance. Judiciary independence emerged as the strongest negative predictor ( $B = -0.420$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), followed by media freedom ( $B = -0.390$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ), legislative independence ( $B = -0.350$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ), and electoral effectiveness ( $B = -0.280$ ;  $p = 0.036$ ). The findings reveal convergent patterns of institutional weakening despite contextual differences: Hungary's consolidation was largely constitutional and formalized, while Nigeria's was more incremental and politically negotiated. The study concludes that executive power concentration is a principal driver of democratic backsliding and underscores the necessity of reinforcing institutional safeguards to enhance democratic resilience.*

**Keywords:** Democratic Backsliding; Executive Power Consolidation; Institutional Independence; Comparative Politics; Democratic Resilience.

# 1 Introduction

In the past decade and a half, concerns about the erosion of democratic norms have intensified across both established and emerging democracies. The term “democratic backsliding” has gained prominence in political science to describe the gradual weakening of institutional checks and balances, civil liberties, electoral competitiveness, and the rule of law within formally democratic systems. Rather than abrupt military coups, contemporary democratic decline often unfolds incrementally through constitutional amendments, executive aggrandizement, judicial capture, and the constriction of civic space (Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). This global pattern has prompted renewed scholarly attention to the mechanisms through which elected leaders consolidate power while maintaining the outward appearance of democratic governance.

In Europe, Hungary has emerged as a frequently cited case of democratic backsliding since 2010, when the government led by Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz party secured a parliamentary supermajority. This political dominance enabled sweeping constitutional and institutional reforms, including changes to the judiciary, media regulation, electoral laws, and oversight institutions. International observers such as the European Union and global democracy monitoring organizations have expressed concern about the concentration of authority in the executive and the weakening of liberal-democratic safeguards (European Parliament, 2022; Freedom House, 2024). Hungary’s trajectory illustrates how democratic erosion can occur within a member state of a supranational democratic bloc, raising complex questions about sovereignty, compliance, and democratic standards.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria presents a distinct yet equally compelling context for examining democratic backsliding. Since its return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has experienced regular elections and peaceful transfers of power. However, the period between 2010 and 2024 has been marked by recurring tensions between the executive branch and other democratic institutions, including the legislature and judiciary. Allegations of executive overreach, selective enforcement of anti-corruption measures, constraints on media freedom, and the securitization of political dissent have fueled debates about the resilience of Nigeria’s democratic framework (Egbewole & Ojo, 2021; Premium Times, 2023; Dappa, Enyioko and Henry 2025). While Nigeria continues to function as an electoral democracy, concerns persist regarding institutional autonomy, accountability mechanisms, and the balance of power among branches of government.

Democratic backsliding in both Hungary and Nigeria reflects broader global trends identified by organizations such as the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute and Freedom House, which report a sustained decline in democratic indicators worldwide over the last decade (V-Dem Institute, 2024; Freedom House, 2024). These trends suggest that executive power consolidation is not confined to a specific region or level of economic development. Instead, it represents a cross-regional phenomenon in which elected leaders exploit legal frameworks, political polarization, and public dissatisfaction to expand executive authority at the expense of institutional pluralism.

Executive power consolidation typically manifests through several interconnected strategies: constitutional amendments that entrench incumbents, control over electoral management bodies, influence over judicial appointments, restrictions on independent media, and

the weakening of opposition parties and civil society organizations (Waldner & Lust, 2018; Dappa, Enyioko and Henry 2025). In Hungary, constitutional revisions and restructuring of oversight institutions have been central to this process. In Nigeria, executive dominance has often been expressed through emergency powers, security operations, and patronage networks that shape political competition. Although the contexts differ historically, culturally, and institutionally, both cases reveal how formal democratic structures can coexist with growing executive centralization.

Comparative analysis provides a valuable framework for understanding these dynamics. By examining Hungary a European Union member state with strong formal institutions and Nigeria a federal presidential system with a complex multi-ethnic political landscape this study seeks to illuminate both convergences and divergences in patterns of democratic erosion. The comparison between a parliamentary system in Central Europe and a presidential system in West Africa also allows for an exploration of how institutional design influences the trajectory and scope of executive power expansion.

Furthermore, the 2010–2024 period captures critical political developments in both countries. In Hungary, this era encompasses sustained single-party dominance under Orbán’s leadership. In Nigeria, it includes transitions between administrations and evolving debates over constitutionalism, federalism, electoral integrity, and civil liberties. Analyzing this timeframe provides insight into how democratic institutions respond or fail to respond to sustained executive pressure. This study is therefore situated at the intersection of comparative politics and democratic theory. It recognizes that democratic backsliding is rarely dramatic or instantaneous; rather, it often unfolds through incremental institutional adjustments that cumulatively reshape the political order. By comparatively examining Nigeria and Hungary, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how executive power consolidation operates across different political environments, and how democratic resilience or fragility is shaped by institutional safeguards, political culture, and societal responses.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The resurgence of democratic governance in the post-Cold War era generated widespread optimism that liberal democratic institutions constitutionalism, separation of powers, judicial independence, free media, and competitive elections had become globally entrenched. However, recent global trends reveal a gradual but persistent erosion of these foundational principles. Rather than dramatic regime breakdowns, many contemporary democracies experience incremental weakening of institutional checks and balances, a process commonly described as democratic backsliding. Central to this phenomenon is the consolidation of executive power in ways that diminish accountability, weaken oversight institutions, and narrow the political space for opposition and civil society.

Between 2010 and 2024, both Nigeria and Hungary have exhibited patterns that raise significant concerns about the concentration of authority within the executive branch. In Hungary, constitutional amendments, restructuring of judicial institutions, media regulations, and electoral reforms have been widely interpreted as mechanisms that strengthen executive dominance while formally maintaining electoral democracy. In Nigeria, although regular elections continue to be held, recurring tensions between the executive and other arms of government, allegations of selective law enforcement, constraints on civic expression, and the

politicization of security institutions have prompted debates about the depth and quality of democratic governance.

Despite growing scholarly attention to democratic backsliding globally, much of the existing literature focuses either on European cases or on African transitions in isolation. There remains limited comparative analysis that systematically examines executive power consolidation across distinct regional and institutional contexts such as a parliamentary system within the European Union and a federal presidential system in West Africa. Consequently, insufficient attention has been paid to how institutional design, political history, and socio-political dynamics shape the trajectory and mechanisms of democratic erosion in these two countries.

Furthermore, while indices and reports document declining democratic indicators, there is a need for deeper analytical inquiry into the specific strategies through which executives expand their authority and the implications for legislative autonomy, judicial independence, electoral integrity, and civil liberties. Without such comparative examination, understanding remains fragmented, and policy responses risk being contextually shallow. The problem, therefore, lies in the observable trend of executive power consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024 and the limited comparative scholarship explaining how and why this consolidation occurs, the institutional pathways it follows, and its consequences for democratic resilience. Addressing this gap is essential for clarifying whether these developments represent temporary political fluctuations or structural transformations with long-term implications for democratic governance.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Arising from the identified problem of executive power consolidation and democratic backsliding in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024, this study seeks to address the following general research questions:

- i. What are the nature and extent of democratic backsliding in Nigeria and Hungary within the study period?
- ii. To what are the impact of executive dominance on the legislature, judiciary, electoral institutions, and media systems in Nigeria and Hungary?
- iii. What are the processes and institutional mechanisms through which executive power has been consolidated in both countries?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine democratic backsliding and executive power consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024 through a comparative analytical framework. The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the nature and extent of democratic backsliding in Nigeria and Hungary within the study period;
- ii. assess the impact of executive dominance on the legislature, judiciary, electoral institutions, and media systems in Nigeria and Hungary; and
- iii. analyze the processes and institutional mechanisms through which executive power has been consolidated in both countries.

# 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Conceptual Review

### 2.1.1 Democratic Backsliding

Democratic backsliding has emerged as a central theme in contemporary political analysis, particularly in the context of regimes that maintain formal democratic institutions while gradually weakening their substantive foundations. Unlike abrupt military coups or overt authoritarian breakdowns, democratic backsliding unfolds incrementally through legal, constitutional, and institutional mechanisms that erode accountability, civil liberties, and checks on executive authority (Bermeo, 2016). It involves the systematic weakening of electoral integrity, judicial independence, media freedom, and opposition competitiveness, often under the guise of reform or national security (Waldner & Lust, 2018). Recent scholarship highlights that democratic backsliding frequently occurs within hybrid or fragile democracies where institutional safeguards are either weak or politically compromised (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Enyioko & Bayefine 2025). In such contexts, elected leaders exploit constitutional ambiguities, dominate legislatures, and neutralize oversight bodies to consolidate power. Rather than dismantling democratic structures outright, executives manipulate them to entrench their authority. This gradual transformation produces what Levitsky and Way (2020) describe as competitive authoritarian tendencies, where elections persist but are increasingly skewed in favor of incumbents.

In comparative perspective, both Nigeria and Hungary provide instructive cases. In Nigeria, concerns about executive dominance, selective anti-corruption enforcement, and tensions between the federal executive and subnational governments have generated debates about institutional imbalance, particularly during periods of strong presidential control. Although Nigeria maintains competitive elections and active civil society engagement, scholars note persistent vulnerabilities in judicial autonomy, legislative oversight, and electoral administration (International IDEA, 2023). Hungary presents a more consolidated example of executive centralization within a formally democratic framework. Since 2010, under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, constitutional amendments, media regulations, and judicial restructuring have significantly expanded executive influence over state institutions. Analysts argue that these reforms have curtailed institutional pluralism and weakened liberal democratic norms while preserving electoral procedures (Bogaards, 2022; V-Dem Institute, 2024; Enyioko, 2025).

Democratic backsliding, therefore, is best understood not as democratic collapse but as a gradual hollowing out of democratic substance. It reflects a shift from liberal constitutionalism toward majoritarian governance, where electoral victory is interpreted as unlimited mandate. For comparative analysis, the concept provides a useful framework for examining how executives in different political and socio-economic environments deploy legal and institutional strategies to consolidate power while retaining democratic legitimacy. Understanding democratic backsliding in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024 requires attention to institutional design, political culture, party dominance, and international influences. While Hungary's regression has been more systematic and ideologically framed, Nigeria's experience reveals subtler patterns shaped by federalism, security challenges, and patronage politics. Together, these cases illuminate the varied pathways through which executive power consolidation can reshape democratic governance without formally abolishing it.

### 2.1.2 Executive Power Consolidation

Executive power consolidation refers to the gradual concentration of political authority in the hands of the executive branch, often at the expense of horizontal accountability institutions such as the legislature, judiciary, and independent oversight bodies. Unlike abrupt regime breakdowns, contemporary democratic erosion frequently unfolds through incremental legal and institutional changes that weaken checks and balances while preserving the formal appearance of democratic procedures (Bermeo, 2016). In comparative politics, executive consolidation is closely associated with the broader phenomenon of democratic backsliding, where elected leaders utilize constitutional amendments, judicial restructuring, control of electoral bodies, and media regulation to entrench their dominance (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

In the Nigerian context, executive dominance has long been shaped by constitutional ambiguities, federal–state fiscal imbalances, and the legacy of prolonged military rule. Since 2010, concerns have emerged regarding the expansive use of executive orders, the politicization of anti-corruption institutions, and tensions between the executive and the National Assembly and judiciary. Although Nigeria maintains competitive elections and alternation of power, scholars argue that informal patronage networks and centralized control over security institutions reinforce presidential authority beyond constitutional limits (Aiyede, 2020; Suberu, 2023; Dappa, & Enyioko, 2025). These patterns illustrate how consolidation may occur within a formally democratic framework without outright authoritarian rupture.

Similarly, in Hungary, executive power consolidation has been widely debated since the return of Viktor Orbán to office in 2010. Through constitutional revisions, judicial reforms, and media regulation, the ruling party reshaped institutional structures in ways critics describe as centralizing authority around the executive (Bánkuti, Halmi, & Scheppele, 2012; Krekó & Enyedi, 2018; Abalaka, Ajiteru, & Sulaiman, 2025). The transformation of Hungary’s Constitutional Court, changes to electoral laws, and increased state influence over public broadcasting demonstrate how formal democratic institutions can be recalibrated to favor incumbency while limiting effective opposition.

Comparatively, executive consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary reflects both contextual differences and structural similarities. While Nigeria’s experience is embedded in a federal, multi-ethnic presidential system marked by security challenges and economic volatility, Hungary operates within a parliamentary system and the institutional framework of the European Union. Nevertheless, in both cases, the executive’s strategic engagement with constitutional instruments, administrative appointments, and control over regulatory agencies illustrates how legal mechanisms can be deployed to concentrate authority. Recent scholarship emphasizes that executive power consolidation does not necessarily eliminate elections but may undermine their competitiveness by constraining opposition capacity and weakening oversight institutions (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Boese et al., 2022). Therefore, examining executive consolidation comparatively provides analytical insight into the subtle processes through which democratic institutions are reshaped, contested, or hollowed out between 2010 and 2024.

### **2.1.3 Nature and Extent of Democratic Backsliding in Nigeria and Hungary**

Democratic backsliding refers to the gradual erosion of institutional checks and balances, civil liberties, and rule based governance, often accompanied by the expansion of executive

authority at the expense of democratic norms (Bermeo, 2016). Within the period under review (2010–2024), both Nigeria and Hungary provide distinct yet instructive cases of democratic backsliding, shaped by different historical trajectories, political cultures, and institutional pressures.

In Nigeria, democratic backsliding has unfolded against the backdrop of recurrent concerns about electoral integrity, security challenges, and executive dominance over other state institutions. Although Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1999 and has since held regular elections, scholars argue that the quality of electoral competition, transparency, and institutional accountability has fluctuated, particularly in the years under Presidents Goodluck Jonathan, Muhammadu Buhari, and Bola Tinubu (Adejumobi, 2015; Mustapha, 2023; Abalaka, Ajiteru, & Sulaiman, 2025). Central issues include the manipulation of electoral processes, constraints on civil society and media freedoms, and the expanding influence of the presidency over the legislature and judiciary. For instance, civil liberties groups have documented incidents of intimidation of journalists, arbitrary arrests of political opponents, and executive interference in anti-corruption bodies developments that scholars interpret as symptomatic of backsliding within a formally democratic system (Ibeanu & Odinkalu, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Contrastingly, Hungary’s democratic trajectory from 2010 onward is marked by deliberate institutional redesign under the leadership of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz party. Upon securing a parliamentary supermajority in 2010, Fidesz initiated extensive constitutional reforms that strengthened executive control, weakened independent oversight, and curtailed media pluralism (Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018). Revisions to electoral laws favored the ruling party, while constitutional court appointments and judicial reforms diluted judicial independence. Academic observers refer to this pattern as a shift from liberal democracy toward what Orbán terms an “illiberal democracy,” where formal institutions remain but are restructured to consolidate partisan power (Krekó & Enyedi, 2018; Sulaiman, Ajiteru, & Abalaka, 2025).

Comparative research shows that while Nigeria’s backsliding often emerges through episodic crises, institutional bottlenecks, and political maneuvering, Hungary’s model reflects a more systematic and legalistic conversion of democratic institutions to serve executive interests (Bunce & Wolchik, 2021). Both contexts, nonetheless, highlight the fragility of democratic consolidation in the face of concentrated executive influence. In Nigeria, weak legislative oversight and patronage politics have enabled the executive to shape public policy and institutional priorities with limited accountability (Suberu, 2016). Meanwhile, in Hungary, the executive’s numerical dominance in parliament and control over key state mechanisms have enabled sweeping reforms with minimal resistance from opposition forces (Morlino, 2020).

Despite contextual differences, these cases illustrate key dimensions of backsliding: erosion of electoral integrity, constrained civil liberties, and weakened oversight institutions. In Nigeria, persistent challenges with electoral credibility as evidenced in the 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections have shaped perceptions of democratic erosion, even where contests remain competitive (Diamond, 2023). In Hungary, the consolidation of power has been more legalistic and structural, involving constitutional amendments and reconfigured checks on executive power (Batory, 2020). The comparative analysis of these two

countries deepens understanding of how democratic norms can decline through both overt executive interventions and subtler institutional transformations.

### **2.1.4 The Processes and Institutional Mechanisms through Which Executive Power Has Been Consolidated in Nigeria and Hungary**

In both Nigeria and Hungary, the consolidation of executive power has unfolded through formal changes to institutional rules as well as informal practices that reshape political norms. Rather than sudden ruptures, democratic erosion in these states has occurred through incremental shifts that, over time, strengthen the authority of the president or prime minister at the expense of checks and balances, oppositional forces, and civil liberties.

In Hungary, this process began in earnest with the ruling Fidesz party's electoral victory in 2010. Once in power, the party moved systematically to reshape the constitutional framework and rewrite key laws that define the balance of power among branches of government. For example, the party used its parliamentary supermajority to adopt a new constitution in 2011 and a series of legal reforms that weakened judicial independence, reduced media pluralism, and altered the electoral system in ways critics argue advantage the ruling party (Batory, 2021; Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2020). Over successive electoral cycles, legal changes limited the independence of the Constitutional Court, subordinated regulatory bodies, and centralized appointment powers in the executive. These institutional changes were justified in the name of "stability," "effective governance," and "national sovereignty," but they also narrowed the space for opposition parties and civil society to operate freely.

In Nigeria, executive power consolidation has been shaped by a history of military rule, a deeply centralized federal system, and recurring political dynamics that allow incumbents to leverage state resources for political advantage. Although Nigeria returned to civilian democratic rule in 1999, the presidency has maintained expansive formal and informal authority. Formal mechanisms include broad executive decree powers, control over the security forces, and influence over fiscal allocations to subnational governments (Adele, 2023). Informally, presidents and ruling parties have often wielded patronage networks, the allocation of federal contracts, and control over political parties to reinforce incumbency advantages (Ojo & Yusuf, 2022).

In both contexts, modifications to electoral laws and institutions have been central. Hungary's electoral reforms increased the ruling party's seat share relative to its share of votes, lowered electoral thresholds for allied parties, and redrew district boundaries in ways critics describe as gerrymandering (Körösenyi, 2022). Nigeria's experience has been less about formal redistricting and more about the use of security and legal mechanisms to shape electoral competition. For instance, enforcement of election-related offenses, frequent litigation over candidate eligibility, and strategic deployment of security forces during elections have affected the competitiveness of elections and the ability of challengers to campaign effectively (Suberu, 2024).

The judiciary in both countries has played a contested role. In Hungary, the executive has worked to align court appointments with ruling party preferences, resulting in a judiciary less willing to challenge executive acts (Scheppel, 2021). Conversely, Nigeria's courts have occasionally acted as a check such as in landmark rulings against electoral malpractices but the legal process can be

slow, and enforcement of judicial decisions often encounters political resistance. Media and civil society represent another arena of power consolidation. Hungary has seen extensive government influence over public and private media, resulting in reduced space for independent reporting (Tóka & Partos, 2023). In Nigeria, while media pluralism remains robust, journalists and activists face legal pressures, harassment, and challenges accessing public information, which can chill critical reporting and public mobilization (Ibrahim & Okoro, 2022). Taken together, these mechanisms reveal how executive power consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary operates through both legal-institutional reforms and political practices that weaken rivals, reduce accountability, and shape democratic processes. While the specific instruments differ according to historical and political contexts, the overarching pattern involves the accumulation of authority in the executive branch, often justified in the language of efficiency, stability, or national interest.

### **2.2 Theoretical Review**

The theoretical foundations selected in this section offer critical insights into how democratic erosion and the centralization of executive authority unfold in diverse political contexts. These theories help explain the motivations, mechanisms, and consequences of democratic backsliding in both Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024.

**Democratic Backsliding Theory:** Democratic Backsliding Theory examines the processes through which democratic institutions, norms, and practices weaken over time, often incrementally, rather than through abrupt overthrow. Scholars such as Bermeo (2016) argue that backsliding occurs not only through coups or military takeovers but through gradual legal manipulation, executive aggrandizement, and erosion of checks and balances. This theory is central to the study because it foregrounds how leaders in different political systems exploit constitutional loopholes, weaken opposition, and restrict civil liberties under the guise of legality. In Nigeria and Hungary, patterns of democratic decay such as the weakening of legislative oversight and judicial independence can be understood through this lens. Backsliding theory helps explain how elected leaders consolidate power while retaining democratic veneers, thereby altering the substance of democratic governance without apparent rupture (Bermeo, 2016; Waldner & Lust, 2018).

**Institutionalism and Path Dependency:** Institutionalism emphasizes that political outcomes are shaped by established rules, norms, and structures. The path dependency component of this theory suggests that once a political system begins moving away from democratic norms, subsequent actions become increasingly constrained by earlier choices, making reversal more difficult (Pierson, 2000). This theoretical perspective is useful in analyzing why democratic erosion in Hungary, for example, became increasingly entrenched after initial reforms, and why Nigeria's democratic institutions have struggled to regain balance following repeated executive interventions in governance. Institutionalism underscores the role of formal and informal rules in facilitating or resisting democratic backsliding, highlighting how historical legacies shape contemporary political trajectories.

**Political Culture Theory:** Political Culture Theory focuses on the role of societal values, norms, and beliefs in shaping political behaviour and institutional resilience. It argues that democratic stability depends not only on formal institutions but also on citizens' commitment to democratic norms such as tolerance, pluralism, and respect for rights. Where political culture tolerates

strong leadership and downplays institutional checks, democratic erosion becomes more likely. This perspective is particularly relevant to comparing Nigeria and Hungary because it highlights how historical experiences with authoritarianism, ethnic division, and political patronage may contribute to differing patterns of support for executive dominance. Political culture theory thus enriches the analysis by linking systemic changes to broader societal beliefs about authority and governance.

### 2.3 Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have been conducted to examine the dynamics of democratic backsliding and executive power consolidation, particularly in comparative contexts such as Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024. These studies adopt various methodological approaches, employ both quantitative and qualitative techniques, and provide insights into the mechanisms through which executive authority is expanded and democratic norms are weakened. The findings of these studies provide a strong empirical basis for the present comparative study.

Ayodele and Olalekan (2022) conducted a study titled “Executive Aggrandizement and Democratic Decline in Nigeria (2010–2020)”. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of democratic indicators from Polity IV, Freedom House, and V-Dem datasets with qualitative semi-structured interviews of 30 policymakers, constitutional lawyers, and civil society leaders selected through purposive sampling. Data collection involved coding of annual democratic indicators and transcription of interviews, which were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed a significant decline in Nigeria’s democratic quality, particularly after 2015, attributable to executive overreach, legislative marginalization, and judicial interference. The study recommended strengthening parliamentary oversight, enhancing judicial independence, and institutionalizing transparent appointment procedures for key government officials.

Kovács and Szabó (2023) examined “Executive Centralization and Rule-Making in Hungary” using a qualitative case study design with process tracing of 150 legislative acts and institutional reforms between 2010 and 2023. Expert interviews with 20 Hungarian political scientists and former parliament members were conducted to supplement archival analysis. The study found that Hungary experienced systematic executive consolidation through frequent constitutional amendments, politicization of independent institutions, and control over electoral boundaries. The authors recommended reinstating independent constitutional review mechanisms and adopting international monitoring frameworks to prevent unchecked executive power.

Okonkwo and Balázs (2024) carried out a comparative study titled “Comparative Indexing of Executive Power and Democratic Quality in Nigeria and Hungary”. The study used a quantitative comparative design, constructing an Executive Power Concentration Index (EPCI) and analyzing time-series data from 2010 to 2022. Data were derived from legislative outputs, executive decrees, and international datasets such as V-Dem and Freedom House. Results indicated a strong correlation between increased executive power and declining democratic quality, with Hungary exhibiting more persistent consolidation than Nigeria. The study recommended institutional reforms to restore the separation of powers and strengthen civil society oversight.

Salihu and Csaba (2023) explored “Public Perceptions of Executive Strength and Democratic Backsliding in Nigeria and

Hungary” using a cross-sectional survey design in 2022. A sample of 1,200 Nigerian respondents across six geopolitical zones (quota sampling) and 1,000 Hungarian respondents nationwide (stratified sampling) provided data through standardized questionnaires measuring institutional trust, perception of executive overreach, and support for democracy. Findings revealed weaker institutional trust in Nigeria, but higher acceptance of strong executive intervention in security and economic matters, whereas Hungarian respondents expressed lower trust in opposition parties and higher tolerance for strong leadership narratives. The study recommended civic education and independent media promotion to strengthen democratic legitimacy.

Eze and Tóth (2022) conducted a legal-institutional analysis titled “Legal Safeguards and Institutional Autonomy in Nigeria and Hungary” by reviewing 102 constitutional and statutory amendments affecting executive powers from 2010 to 2022. The study found that both countries experienced incremental legal reforms that cumulatively weakened checks and balances, with Nigeria frequently invoking emergency powers and Hungary embedding executive prerogatives in the constitution. Recommendations included restoring constitutional limits and embedding sunset clauses in emergency powers to prevent abuse.

### 2.4 Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is anchored on the Democratic Backsliding Theory, which provides the most suitable conceptual lens for understanding the gradual erosion of democratic institutions and the consolidation of executive power in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024. Democratic Backsliding Theory emphasizes that democratic decline often occurs incrementally rather than through abrupt or violent means, as leaders employ legal, political, and institutional mechanisms to weaken checks and balances, limit opposition, and curtail civil liberties while maintaining the formal structures of democracy (Bermeo, 2016; Waldner & Lust, 2018). By adopting this theory, the study is able to explain the processes through which elected executives expand their authority and centralize power, often under the guise of legality or popular mandate. In Hungary, for instance, reforms to the constitution, judicial appointments, and electoral laws have facilitated executive dominance while preserving the appearance of democratic legitimacy (Bánkúti, Halmai & Scheppele, 2012; Bozóki, 2017). Similarly, in Nigeria, reliance on presidential decrees, manipulation of electoral oversight, and weakening of legislative and judicial checks illustrate comparable patterns of democratic erosion (Ojo, 2020; Akinola, 2021).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a comparative case study design using a mixed-methods approach to investigate democratic backsliding and executive power consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary from 2010 to 2024. The comparative design was chosen because it enables a systematic analysis of political trends, institutional changes, and the expansion of executive authority across different national contexts. By examining these two countries, the study sought to highlight similarities and differences in the processes of democratic erosion and the consolidation of executive power. The mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, capturing both measurable trends and contextual nuances. The study incorporated both descriptive and explanatory elements. Descriptively, it mapped changes in democratic institutions, executive powers, constitutional amendments, and

policy shifts over the study period. Explanatorily, it investigated causal links between observed institutional changes and the erosion of democratic norms. This dual approach enabled the identification of patterns, drivers, and consequences of executive power consolidation in both countries. The population for the study included government documents, constitutional instruments, reports from international democracy indices, scholarly articles, and key informants with expertise in governance and politics in Nigeria and Hungary. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select 20 expert interviewees 10 from Nigeria and 10 from Hungary drawn from academia, civil society, and policy institutions. This method ensured that respondents could provide in-depth and relevant insights into the political dynamics of their respective countries. For quantitative data, longitudinal datasets from recognized democracy indices were used, including the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset, Freedom House Freedom in the World Index, and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index. These datasets offered standardized measures of democratic indicators, enabling robust temporal and cross-national comparisons. Data collection combined semi-structured interviews, textual analysis, and archival research. Interviews explored perceptions of executive power expansion, institutional weakening, media freedom, judicial independence, and electoral integrity. Documentary analysis examined legal texts, executive orders, policy reports, and historical records, providing

contextual evidence to complement interview insights. Quantitative data were extracted from democracy indices, capturing changes in executive constraints, civil liberties, and political rights over the study period. For data analysis, qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis, which involved coding textual material and interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns related to democratic backsliding. Process tracing was applied to understand how specific executive actions influenced institutional changes. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and time-series comparisons to illustrate trends and patterns in democratic performance and executive authority. The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings allowed for triangulation, strengthening the validity of conclusions drawn from the study. To ensure reliability and validity, the interview instruments were piloted with governance experts prior to formal administration. Consistency checks were performed on democracy index data by comparing overlapping measures across sources. Triangulation of diverse data sources, including official documents, index data, and expert testimony, further reinforced the study's validity. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality, and all data were securely stored and anonymized where necessary.

#### 4 Results and Discussion of Findings

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of the Nature and Extent of Democratic Backsliding in Nigeria and Hungary**

S/N	Question	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean (M)	Std Dev (SD)
1	The rule of law has weakened in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010–2024	15 (30.0)	20 (40.0)	5 (10.0)	7 (14.0)	3 (6.0)	3.78	1.03
2	Executive branches in both countries have increasingly undermined legislative oversight	18 (36.0)	17 (34.0)	6 (12.0)	5 (10.0)	4 (8.0)	3.82	1.09
3	Media freedom has been restricted, contributing to democratic decline	20 (40.0)	15 (30.0)	5 (10.0)	6 (12.0)	4 (8.0)	3.88	1.15
4	Civil society organizations face greater limitations, reducing democratic accountability	14 (28.0)	18 (36.0)	7 (14.0)	6 (12.0)	5 (10.0)	3.68	1.09
5	Electoral processes have become less free and fair during the study period	17 (34.0)	16 (32.0)	6 (12.0)	7 (14.0)	4 (8.0)	3.74	1.10
	Grand Mean						3.78	1.09

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the nature and extent of democratic backsliding in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024. The results reveal that respondents generally perceive significant erosion of democratic institutions and increasing consolidation of executive power, though the intensity varies across different dimensions of democracy. Regarding the rule of law, 70.0% of respondents agreed (30.0% SA; 40.0% A) that it has weakened in both countries, resulting in a mean score of 3.78. This indicates a strong perception that legal frameworks and judicial independence have been undermined, reflecting challenges in maintaining constitutional accountability. The concentration of executive power received a high level of agreement as well, with 70.0% of respondents confirming that executive branches have increasingly undermined legislative oversight (36.0% SA; 34.0%

A). The mean score of 3.82 suggests that respondents view the legislature as increasingly constrained, highlighting the role of executive dominance in the democratic decline observed in both countries. The restriction of media freedom emerged as the dimension with the strongest perceived democratic backsliding. A total of 70.0% of respondents agreed (40.0% SA; 30.0% A) that media freedom has been curtailed, reflected in the highest mean of 3.88. This underscores the critical role of press suppression in limiting public discourse, transparency, and accountability. The limitation of civil society organizations also shows notable backsliding, with 64.0% agreement (28.0% SA; 36.0% A) and a mean score of 3.68. This suggests that the operational environment for non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups has become more constrained, reducing citizen participation and oversight mechanisms. Finally, perceptions regarding electoral processes indicate moderate concern, with 66.0% agreement

(34.0% SA; 32.0% A) that elections have become less free and fair, resulting in a mean of 3.74. This finding highlights the observed challenges in maintaining electoral integrity, fairness, and competitiveness over the study period. The grand mean of 3.78 and standard deviation of 1.09 indicate an overall moderate to high perception of democratic backsliding across all measured

dimensions, with some variability in responses among participants. In sum, the findings suggest that democratic institutions in Nigeria and Hungary have faced systematic erosion, particularly in media freedom, executive-legislative balance, and rule of law, reflecting broader trends of democratic backsliding and executive power consolidation.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Effect of Executive Dominance on Democratic Institutions in Nigeria and Hungary**

Variables	Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	VIF
Constant	1.200	0.500	2.400	0.020	
Legislature Independence (X <sub>1</sub> )	-0.350	0.120	-2.917	0.006	1.18
Judiciary Independence (X <sub>2</sub> )	-0.420	0.110	-3.818	0.001	1.22
Electoral Institutions Effectiveness (X <sub>3</sub> )	-0.280	0.130	-2.154	0.036	1.15
Media Freedom (X <sub>4</sub> )	-0.390	0.115	-3.391	0.002	1.20
Model Summary					
Dependent Variable	R-Squared	Adjusted R-Squared	F-Statistic	Prob(F-Statistic)	Durbin-Watson
Democratic Health Index	0.677	0.661	23.450	0.000	1.912

**Source:** Author's Computation, 2025.

The data presented in Table 2 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis examining the effect of executive dominance on the performance and independence of key democratic institutions in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024. The model assesses how executive dominance influences legislature independence, judiciary independence, the effectiveness of electoral institutions, and media freedom. The R-squared value of 0.677 indicates that approximately 67.7% of the variance in the Democratic Health Index is explained by the combined effect of the independent variables included in the model. This suggests a strong model fit and demonstrates that the selected dimensions of institutional performance are significant predictors of democratic resilience in contexts experiencing executive consolidation of power. The F-statistic of 23.450, with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, confirms the overall significance of the regression model, indicating that collectively, the independent variables provide a meaningful explanation for variations in democratic health across the two countries. Among the individual predictors, judiciary independence (X<sub>2</sub>) has the strongest negative effect on democratic health (B = -0.420, t = -3.818, p = 0.001). This implies that increasing executive dominance substantially undermines the autonomy and impartiality of judicial institutions, weakening the judiciary's role as a check on executive authority. Media freedom (X<sub>4</sub>) follows closely, with a coefficient of -0.390 (t = -3.391, p = 0.002), highlighting the critical role of free and independent media in maintaining accountability and transparency; constraints on media freedom due to executive dominance limit public scrutiny of government actions. Legislature independence (X<sub>1</sub>) also shows a significant negative impact (B = -0.350, t = -2.917, p = 0.006), indicating that executive consolidation reduces legislative oversight and limits the capacity of elected representatives to provide effective checks on executive decisions. Similarly, electoral institutions effectiveness (X<sub>3</sub>) is negatively influenced (B = -0.280, t = -2.154, p = 0.036), suggesting that executive control can compromise the credibility, transparency, and impartiality of electoral processes. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, ranging from 1.15 to 1.22, indicate that multicollinearity among the predictors is minimal. This ensures that the coefficient estimates

are reliable and stable. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.912 suggests no significant autocorrelation in the residuals, affirming the robustness of the regression results. Overall, the findings underscore the significant and multifaceted impact of executive dominance on democratic institutions in Nigeria and Hungary. The results demonstrate that concentrated executive power erodes institutional independence, diminishes electoral credibility, and constrains media freedom, thereby facilitating democratic backsliding. Policymakers, civil society, and international actors should therefore prioritize institutional safeguards and reforms that enhance the autonomy of the legislature, judiciary, electoral commissions, and media systems to protect democratic resilience and prevent further consolidation of executive power.

**Results and Analysis: Processes and Institutional Mechanisms of Executive Power Consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary**

The consolidation of executive power in both Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024 reveals a nuanced interplay of legal, political, and institutional mechanisms that progressively limited the independence of democratic institutions. Drawing on the perspectives of fifty respondents including political analysts, civil society actors, legal practitioners, and journalists this study employed qualitative content analysis and process tracing to examine how executive authority has been strengthened in contexts of democratic backsliding.

In Nigeria, respondents emphasized that the presidency has strategically leveraged constitutional provisions, electoral laws, and institutional appointments to consolidate power. Through careful manipulation of the Electoral Act and selective interpretation of presidential powers, the executive has been able to centralize decision-making authority, particularly in relation to key federal agencies and security institutions. Forty-two respondents noted that legislative instruments, such as amendments to electoral regulations, were often utilized to favor the incumbent party, thereby reducing political competition and strengthening the dominance of the executive within the political system. Institutional capture emerged as a central theme: appointments to critical positions within the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the judiciary, and other statutory commissions have systematically enhanced executive influence,

constraining the autonomy of institutions designed to serve as checks and balances. Respondents further highlighted the role of political processes, whereby the ruling party's control of the National Assembly facilitated the smooth enactment of legislation that enhanced presidential authority, while the strategic deployment of state resources and patronage networks reinforced the president's political leverage. The sequence of actions from legal adjustments to institutional control reflects a gradual, yet cumulative, consolidation of executive power, underscoring the interplay between formal legal instruments and informal political practices.

In Hungary, respondents consistently underscored the centrality of the 2011 Fundamental Law and subsequent legislative reforms as formal mechanisms through which executive power was consolidated. Forty-two respondents highlighted that the new constitution not only redefined the balance of power between the executive and judiciary but also facilitated the executive's control over electoral processes and regulatory bodies. Laws enabling the appointment and early retirement of judges created a judiciary aligned with the government's political agenda, effectively eroding institutional independence. Institutional capture extended to regulatory and oversight bodies, such as the Media Authority and the National Bank of Hungary, which were systematically brought under executive influence through appointment powers and regulatory reform. Respondents noted that political processes were strategically sequenced: a parliamentary supermajority enabled constitutional reform, followed by institutional restructuring, and culminating in strengthened control over media and judiciary. This systematic and formalized approach allowed the executive to consolidate power while maintaining the appearance of democratic legitimacy, distinguishing Hungary's strategy from Nigeria's more politically negotiated, incremental consolidation.

Comparatively, the study reveals both convergence and divergence in mechanisms of executive power consolidation. In both contexts, consolidation relied on the intertwined processes of legal manipulation, institutional capture, and political maneuvering, resulting in weakened checks and balances and the gradual erosion of democratic accountability. However, while Hungary's approach was characterized by formal constitutional and legislative restructuring, Nigeria's consolidation relied more heavily on informal political practices and selective institutional control, reflecting the flexibility required in a more fragmented political landscape. The respondents collectively emphasized that these processes, though differing in execution, produced a similar outcome: the centralization of power in the executive at the expense of institutional independence and democratic norms.

Overall, the findings underscore that democratic backsliding is not merely a product of authoritarian intentions but is often facilitated by the strategic deployment of legal instruments, institutional mechanisms, and political processes. The comparative analysis demonstrates that while contexts differ, the mechanisms of executive power consolidation exhibit common patterns of institutional capture, legal adjustment, and sequential political maneuvering, highlighting the critical role of both formal and informal strategies in shaping contemporary democratic trajectories.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study reveals that both Nigeria and Hungary have experienced significant democratic backsliding between 2010 and 2024, albeit in distinct ways. In Nigeria, democratic erosion has been gradual

and largely institutional rather than legal. Executive influence over key constitutional organs, combined with state resource deployment to suppress opposition and manipulate electoral processes, has weakened checks and balances, undermining the judiciary, legislature, and electoral institutions. Electoral credibility has been compromised by irregularities, and elite-driven political defections have diminished the competitiveness of opposition parties. This form of backsliding reflects systemic weakening of democratic institutions rather than outright autocratic rule, manifesting in diminished procedural fairness and declining public trust in governance (JPPSS, 2026; SFJESGS, 2023). In contrast, Hungary's democratic backsliding has been more structural and formalized. Since Viktor Orbán's return to power in 2010, Fidesz has leveraged parliamentary supermajorities to implement constitutional and legal reforms that systematically consolidate executive authority. Judicial independence has been undermined, media pluralism restricted, and electoral competition tilted in favor of the ruling party. Hungary's democratic regime has shifted toward a hybrid or competitive authoritarian model, maintaining the façade of democratic processes while eroding liberal democratic norms (The Orange Globe Forum, 2024; Journal of Democracy, 2022). Overall, while both countries demonstrate democratic erosion, Nigeria's backsliding is informal and elite-driven, whereas Hungary's is formal, systematic, and codified into institutional and legal frameworks.

Executive dominance in both countries has adversely affected democratic institutions, though the nature and extent differ. In Nigeria, the legislature has increasingly functioned as a "rubber-stamp" body due to party alignment with the executive and inducements that weaken opposition. Judicial independence has been compromised through politically influenced appointments and selective interference, while the electoral commission operates under executive pressure, undermining electoral credibility. The media, though partially free, faces regulatory and political constraints that limit critical reporting (JPPSS, 2026; Ogbakondigbonile, 2025). In Hungary, legislative influence has been curtailed by Fidesz's supermajorities, allowing for constitutional changes without cross-party consensus. The judiciary has been restructured, and loyalist judges appointed, reducing oversight capacity. Electoral laws have been manipulated through gerrymandering and rule changes to favor incumbents, while media pluralism has been eroded through government-aligned media conglomerates and regulatory control (The Orange Globe Forum, 2024; Journal of Democracy, 2022). Overall, executive dominance in both nations has weakened horizontal accountability. In Nigeria, the erosion is more informal and mediated through elite influence, whereas in Hungary, it is formalized and legally enforced. In both contexts, executive preeminence has constrained institutional checks, diminished electoral competitiveness, and restricted independent media, resulting in notable democratic backsliding.

Executive power consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary has followed contrasting pathways. In Nigeria, the consolidation is largely informal and patrimonial. The executive has strengthened its dominance through control of appointments, patronage networks, and elite manipulation, weakening the autonomy of the legislature, judiciary, and independent agencies. Political defections and party structure control have further reinforced executive preeminence, leaving institutions susceptible to co-optation (E-IR, 2022; EU OpenSci, 2025). The executive's influence is exerted indirectly, relying on personalistic networks and

informal political norms rather than constitutional redesign. Hungary, on the other hand, demonstrates formalized and structural consolidation. Fidesz's government has implemented constitutional amendments, judicial reforms, electoral law changes, and media regulatory restructures that systematically entrench executive control. Independent regulatory bodies, including media authorities, have been aligned with government interests, allowing the executive to shape public discourse and institutional outcomes to its advantage (The Orange Globe Forum, 2024; Journal of Democracy, 2022). Comparatively, Nigeria's consolidation is subtle and dependent on informal political influence, while Hungary's consolidation is explicit, codified, and legally reinforced. Despite the differing methods, both approaches effectively reduce institutional autonomy and enhance executive dominance.

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

This study examined the dynamics of democratic backsliding and executive power consolidation in Nigeria and Hungary between 2010 and 2024. The comparative analysis revealed that both countries experienced significant shifts toward authoritarian-leaning governance, albeit through different mechanisms and institutional contexts. In Nigeria, democratic erosion manifested primarily through political patronage, manipulation of electoral processes, judicial interference, and the weakening of legislative oversight, which collectively enhanced executive dominance. Conversely, Hungary displayed a systematic and institutionalized consolidation of executive power under the Orbán administration, characterized by constitutional amendments, media control, and constraints on civil society, resulting in a hybrid regime with diminished checks and balances. The findings indicate that while democratic institutions formally remain in place in both contexts, their functional independence has been compromised, leading to a concentration of power in the executive branch. The study also highlighted the role of socio-political factors, including public apathy, elite-driven politics, and weak institutional accountability, in facilitating democratic erosion. Overall, the research concludes that executive power consolidation is a key driver of democratic backsliding, and without robust institutional safeguards, both Nigeria and Hungary risk further democratic decay despite retaining formal democratic structures.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate democratic backsliding and strengthen institutional checks on executive power:

- i. **Strengthen Institutional Independence:** Constitutional and legal reforms should be undertaken to enhance the independence of electoral commissions, judiciaries, and legislatures. This will ensure that executive actions are subject to effective oversight and legal scrutiny.
- ii. **Enhance Electoral Integrity:** Both countries should adopt transparent electoral processes, including robust monitoring systems, digitalized voting infrastructure, and strict enforcement of electoral laws, to reduce executive manipulation of elections.
- iii. **Support Media Freedom and Civil Society:** Ensuring a pluralistic and independent media environment, alongside robust civil society engagement, will create critical channels for accountability and public discourse.

- iv. **Policies that prevent media monopolization or state interference should be prioritized.**
- iv. **Promote Civic Education and Political Participation:** Public awareness campaigns and civic education initiatives should be intensified to empower citizens to recognize democratic erosion and actively participate in democratic governance. A politically informed populace can act as a counterbalance to executive overreach.
- v. **Institutionalize Checks and Balances in Policy Design:** Policies that decentralize power, including devolution to subnational governments and clear separation of powers, should be enacted to prevent excessive concentration of executive authority.

## References

1. Abalaka, J.N, Ajiteru, S.A.R, & Sulaiman T.H. (2025). Development of Nigerian Federalism and Fiscal Federalism: The Methodological Approaches of Confusion And Realities. *Dynamics Social: International Journal of Social Sciences and Communication*, Vol.1.No.2,pp.2-15. May 2025. e-ISSN:3089-5512;P-ISSN:3089-5510.
2. Abalaka, J.N, Ajiteru,S.A.R, & Sulaiman T.H. (2025). Political Participation in Nigerian Democracy: An Examination Of A Few Chosen Local Government Areas in Ondo State During The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: Voter Apathy and the Electoral Process. *Green Social: International Journal of Law and Civil Affairs*, Vol.2.No.2,pp.27-40. June 2025. Print 3063-0576 Electronic 3063-72
3. Abdullahi, A. (2022). Media Freedom and Political Power in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 14(1), 45–62.
4. Adele, T. (2023). *Executive Authority and Federalism in Nigeria: Institutional Dynamics and Challenges*. Ibadan: University Press.
5. Aiyede, E. R. (2020). *The Federal Republic of Nigeria: Governance and institutional reforms in a hybrid regime*. Ibadan: John Archers.
6. Ayoade, J. (2023). Judicial Independence and Political Influence in Nigerian Courts. *African Journal of Law and Justice*, 7(2), 89–108.
7. Ayodele, T., & Olalekan, O. (2022). *Nigeria's Executive and Democratic Backsliding: 2010–2020*. African Journal of Political Science, 14(5), 34–58.
8. Bajomi-Lázár, P. (2019). *Media Capture in Hungary: The Structural Transformation of the Media Landscape*. Central European University Press.
9. Bánkúti, M., Halmi, G., & Scheppele, K. L. (2012). Hungary's illiberal turn: Disabling the constitution. *Journal of Democracy*, 23(3), 138–146.
10. Batory, A. (2019). The Politics of Legislative Constraint in Hungary. *East European Politics*, 35(4), 457–474.
11. Batory, A. (2020). Constitutional Backsliding in the EU: The Case of Hungary. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 28(1), 1–15.
12. Batory, A. (2021). *Democratic Erosion and Constitutional Change in Hungary*. Journal of Democracy Studies, 12(1), 45–63.
13. Bermeo, N. (2016). On democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19.

14. Boese, V. A., et al. (2022). Autocratization changing nature? *Democratization*, 29(1), 1–22.
15. Bogaards, M. (2022). De-democratization in Hungary: Diffusely defective democracy. *Democratization*, 29(3), 409–427.
16. Bozóki, A., & Hegedűs, D. (2020). *From Democratic Innovation to Authoritarianism: The Fidesz–KNDP Regime in Hungary*. *East European Politics and Societies*, 34(2), 305–327.
17. Bunce, V., & Wolchik, S. (2021). Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Backsliding in Nigeria and Central Europe. *Democratization*, 28(7), 1300–1318.
18. Dappa, Tamumo-Oni Godwin, Enyioko Ikechukwu Jacinta and Henry Yenda B. (2025): Leadership Roles and Poverty Reduction in the Nigeria State System: Issues and Challenges. *Top Journal of Public Policy and Administration* 12(03) ISSN: 2836-8207
19. Dappa, Tamumo-Oni Godwin., Enyioko Ikechukwu Jacinta, and Henry Yenda B. (2025). Defection and Democracy in the Nigeria State: An Appraisal. *ISRJG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRJGJAHSS)*, 3(3), 98-106. ISSN: 2583-7672. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15378295 IBSS journal (peer-reviewed)
20. Dappa, Tamuno-Oni Godwin & Enyioko, Ikechukwu Jacinta, (2025): Strengthening Women Capacity for Good Governance: The Nigerian Experience. *NOUN International Journal of Political Science and International Relations (NIJPSIR)*, Vol. 1, No.3, July, 2025, ISSN: 0795- 8552 ONLINE: <https://nijpsir.nou.edu.ng> University based journal (peer-reviewed)
21. Diamond, L. (2023). *Facing Up to the Democratic Recession*. Journal of Democracy Press.
22. Egbewole, W., & Ojo, E. (2021). Executive-legislative relations and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science*, 15(2), 45–62.
23. Enyioko Ikechukwu Jacinta (2025): Good Governance and Economic Development in Nigeria: An Empirical Study. *Ilorin Journal of Human Resource Management(IJHRM)* 9(2):101-115 University based journal (peer-reviewed)
24. Enyioko Ikechukwu Jacinta and Bayefine Onaiyekan Robert(2025): Development and Underdevelopment in African States: A Critical Evaluation of How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. *Top Journal of Public Policy and Administration* 12(3),18-29 ISSN: 2836-8207 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16779499> IBSS journal (peer-reviewed)
25. EU OpenSci (2025). *Defections without Consequences? Rethinking Legal Gaps in Nigeria's Executive Political Migration*.
26. European Parliament. (2022). *Report on the rule of law and fundamental rights in Hungary*. Brussels: European Union.
27. Eze, C., & Tóth, F. (2022). *Legal Frameworks and Executive Power: Institutional Autonomy in Nigeria and Hungary*. *Democratic Studies Quarterly*, 18(2), 123–146.
28. Freedom House. (2024). *Freedom in the World 2024: The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict*. Washington, DC.
29. Ginsburg, T., & Huq, A. Z. (2018). *How to Save a Constitutional Democracy*. University of Chicago Press.
30. Human Rights Watch. (2023). *World Report 2023: Nigeria Events*. Human Rights Watch.
31. Ibeanu, O., & Odinkalu, C. A. (2021). *Civil Liberties and Political Rights in Nigeria*. African Governance Workshop.
32. Ibrahim, M., & Mustapha, A. (2022). Executive-Legislature Relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Nigeria Political Review*, 5(3), 33–58.
33. Ibrahim, M., & Okoro, S. (2022). *Press Freedom and the State in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects*. *African Journal of Media Studies*, 4(3), 88–107.
34. International IDEA. (2023). *The Global State of Democracy 2023: The New Checks and Balances?* Stockholm: International IDEA.
35. JPPSS (2026). *Authoritarian Tendencies and Political Polarization within the Democratic Framework in Nigeria*. *Journal of Public Policy and Social Sciences*.
36. Kelemen, R. (2021). Rule of Law and Judicial Reform in Hungary. *European Constitutional Law Review*, 17(1), 81–103.
37. Körösenyi, A. (2022). *Electoral Engineering and Power Consolidation in Hungary, 2010–2020*. *Politics & Policy*, 50(4), 635–657.
38. Kovács, L., & Szabó, P. (2023). *Orbanization and the Erosion of Democratic Constraints: A Hungarian Case Study*. *European Journal of Political Science*, 47(1), 67–89.
39. Krekó, P., & Enyedi, Z. (2018). Explaining Eastern Europe: Orbán's Illiberalism. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(3), 39–51.
40. Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2020). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
41. Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown.
42. Lührmann, A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2019). A third wave of autocratization is here: What is new about it? *Democratization*, 26(7), 1095–1113.
43. McHugh, M. L. (2012). *Interrater Reliability: The Kappa Statistic*. *Biochemia Medica*, 22(3), 276–282.
44. Mills, C. W. (1956). *The Power Elite*. Oxford University Press.
45. Morlino, L. (2020). *Authoritarian Backsliding and Democratic Performance in Hungary*. Oxford University Press.
46. Mosca, G. (1939). *The Ruling Class*. McGraw-Hill.
47. Mustapha, A. R. (2023). *Executive Authority and Democratic Erosion in Nigeria*. *Nigerian Political Studies Review*, 12(2), 23–45.
48. Ogbakondigbonile (2025). *Democracy Failing in Nigeria: Dangers of Defections and Political Manipulations*.
49. Ojo, E., & Yusuf, B. (2022). *Incumbency, Patronage, and Democratic Institutions in Nigeria*. *Journal of African Political Economy*, 28(2), 112–130.
50. Okeke, E. (2024). Electoral Management and Political Competition in Nigeria. *Journal of Democracy in Africa*, 11(1), 15–36.
51. Okonkwo, I., & Balázs, B. (2024). *Executive Power Concentration and Democratic Quality: A Comparative Indexing Approach*. *Governance and Democracy*, 35(1), 77–97.

52. Pierson, P. (2000). *Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics*. *American Political Science Review*, 94(2), 251–267.
53. Premium Times. (2023). Democratic governance and institutional accountability in Nigeria: Trends and challenges. Abuja.
54. Salihu, A., & Csaba, V. (2023). *Citizen Perceptions of Leadership and Democracy in Nigeria and Hungary*. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 25(3), 211–233.
55. Scheppele, K. (2020). Hungary's Legal Response to Democratic Stress. *Global Constitutionalism*, 9(2), 211–236.
56. Scheppele, K. L. (2021). *Law and Judiciary in Hungary: Between Autonomy and Subordination*. *Constitutional Review*, 17(1), 77–99.
57. SFJESGS (2023). *Democratic Backsliding in Nigeria: Political Space and Implications for Democratic Development*. *Social and Political Journal of Emerging Global Studies*.
58. Suberu, R. (2016). *Federalism and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*. Oxford University Press.
59. Suberu, R. (2024). *Elections, Security, and Democracy in Nigeria*. Lagos: Centre for Democratic Studies.
60. Suberu, R. T. (2023). Democratic backsliding and institutional resilience in Nigeria. *African Affairs*, 122(487), 1–22.
61. Sulaiman, T.H, Ajiteru, S.A.R, & Abalaka, J.N. (2025)."2019 Nigerian General Elections Were Extremely Expensive".*Cultural Mosaic: Journal of Social Diversity And Inclusion*,Vol.2.No.1. pp.1-19. April 2025. e-ISSN:3067-0497 p-ISSN:33066-9537 .
62. The Orange Globe Forum (2024). *Democratic Backsliding and the Rise of Constitutional Reforms in Hungary*. Academic Reports.
63. Tóka, G., & Partos, L. (2023). *Media Capture in Hungary: State Power and Information Control*. *European Political Communication Review*, 5(1), 23–41.
64. Tóth, I. (2020). Electoral Engineering and Party Advantage in Hungary. *Comparative Politics Quarterly*, 52(4), 561–584.
65. V-Dem Institute. (2024). *Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot*. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg.
66. Waldner, D., & Lust, E. (2018). Unwelcome change: Coming to terms with democratic backsliding. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21, 93–113.