

Contending Weltanschauungen and the Shrinking of Democratic Spaces

An Appraisals of Nigeria Democratic Practices-2015-2022

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Abstract

Ivan Krastev said “we are all living in Vladimir Putin’s world now”, where sheer force tramples over democratic rights. However, the travails of the liberal order is not only Putin’s Russia, China waits on the wings....Even the bastions of democracy like United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) are not left out. In them have arisen Rightwings populist in the guise of ‘America First’, which cumulated to the January 6, 2021 ‘insurrection’ in Washington and the Brexit brouhaha in UK. Nigeria being a member of the comity of nations is not antipathetic to this trend. Of the twelve largest democratic decline in the world, seven are in Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria is number five. It had been noted that Democratic practise in Nigeria is a hybrid: civil rule, militarism, and ethnic jingoism. In a recent poll by Statista, 77.2% of Nigerians agree that Nigeria democracy is flawed. This paper interrogates the democratic reversal in Nigeria using the Realist Balance of Power (BoP) Framework in the midst of contending Weltanschauungen. The paper argues that Russia and China’s contrary worldview to democratic norms has given countries democratic trade-offs, which have engendered democratic reversal worldwide, Nigeria inclusive. The paper recommends continuous vigilance by Nigerian’s civil societies and others, to insist that democratic tenets are upheld always, as exemplified by their insistence for the signing of the 2022 Electoral Law. Data were collated through documentary methods; these qualitative data were transcribed, interpreted, and analysed through systematic logical deductions.

Keywords: China, democratic reversal, democratic tenets, Nigeria, Russia

1. Introduction

Cicero observed that “it is a difficult art to rule a republic” (Albright 2018, p.111); Albright acquiesced to this, noting that “between his era and ours, government hasn’t become any easier.” (ibid). However, a multi-polar system with Contending Weltanschauungen (world views) that challenge democracy is not a new phenomenon; Hannah Arendt’s, *On Revolution, 1963*, pointed out same, thus “No cause is left but the most ancient of all, the one, in fact, that from the beginning of our history has determined the very existence of politics, the cause of freedom versus tyranny.” (Cited Diamond 2022, p163). However, freedom or democracy always laughs last over tyranny! In the *Christian Bible* the Israelites insisted on a king, which became tyrannical, a century later, their kingdom was divided. Tyrants like Hitler and Mussolini plunged their countries almost to ‘stone age’. And recently President Putin has completely ruined Russia’s energy leverage, especially within Europe.

Conversely, freedom is most exemplified in democracy and liberalism. This is most appreciated when people experience life in an undemocratic world. Liberalism, which is the base of democracy, according to Fukuyama (2022) arose in Europe after the 150 years of chronic religious warfare that was the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation. It was further revitalised after Europe’s caustic nationalistic wars of 1910s and 1930s/40s; after which democracy “spread from Southern Europe to Latin America and Asia, increasing the percentage of states that were democracies from a quarter in 1974 to about 40 percent at the end of 1988.” (Fukuyama 2022 and Diamond 2022, p.163). Democracy was again boosted with a big shot in the arm between 1989-1991, when communism collapsed and people living under it were freed to shape their own futures. This also manifested even in Africa; thus:

Transitions to democracy were then well underway in most of Central and Eastern Europe, Nelson Mandela had been released in South Africa, civil society had toppled a dictatorship in Benin, and other longstanding African dictatorships were on the defensive. Seemingly impregnable dictators soon fell in Zambia, Kenya, and Malawi. By 1994, some forty countries had transitioned to democracy within the space of half a decade (Diamond 2022, p.163).

At this period liberal democracies were held as “the only truly and fully modern societies”. (ibid.) and democracy was dominant normatively and intellectually.

Correspondingly, authoritarianism was atrophied and its atrocities gone, this is the Post-Cold War era. To Diamond (2022, p. 164), democracy pervaded ather sundry regions, atrophying dictatorships’ trail of tears, ruthless human-rights abuses, persistent fear, and colossal corruption, with its attendant economic inertia. Overwhelming global opinion became in favour of democracy as the unsurpassed form of government and by 1995, vast majority of states globally had become democracies.

Fukuyama (2022, p.1) viewed “The horrific Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24 as a critical turning point in world history, many have said that it definitively marks the end of the post-cold war era, a rollback of the Europe whole and free that we thought emerged after 1991, or indeed, the end of The End of History”. However, this paper views the end of that era as not with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but immediately after the killing of Colonel Mummar Gaddafi of Libya in 2011: when Russia met Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in Syria. Thus “We are all living in Vladimir Putin’s world now, a world in which sheer force tramples over rule of law and democratic rights.” (Ivan Krastev, cited in Fukuyama 2022, p.1), with a “growing trend towards a multipolar world.” (President Jinping cited in Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016:7): a world dominated by three contending Weltanschauungen.

The US Weltanschauung that emphasised democratic norms and values; the Russia conservative Weltanschauung, which focuses on national rather than universal values and the Chinese Weltanschauung that emphasises socio-economic and state rights over that of an individual. This has consequences in the world. Global freedom has declined (Fukuyama, 2022). In Africa, coups in Mali, Guinea, Chad and Sudan in 2021 have kindle reminiscences of authoritarian rule and protracted instability, which reproduce a breakdown of trust in governments. Russia has capitalised on this, replicating its Syria playbook by propping up proxies in Africa. China is not left out with her alternative development model and is increasingly getting involved in political and electoral processes in African (Maru 2019, Scott 2021 and Siegle 2022).

In Nigeria, democracy seemed to have stabilised with the defeat of an incumbent president in 2015 and elections regularly held as at when due. Underneath these have been a serious shrinking of democratic spaces: the chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) was unceremoniously removed (Enyiazu 2018); Supreme Court’s Justices are constantly harassed, intimidated and arrested; protesters are randomly shot on Nigeria streets and free speech is attacked by intimidating practitioners, including outright banning of platforms like *Twitter*. Concerns of minorities and diversity are disregarded. The ruling party All Progressive Congress (APC) has not only given it Presidential ticket to Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a South-Westerner, a zone in Nigeria that has produced a president for eight years (1999-2007) and a Vice-President for seven years (2015-2022); they are also fielding a Muslims-Muslims presidential ticket. These acts are shrinking Nigeria democratic spaces and need to be pushed back.

Accordingly, this paper problematized Nigeria shrinking democratic spaces and argues that unlike the previous US led unipolar order that prioritised democracy; the now prevailing order is multi-polar and possesses weltanschauungen that are anti-democratic and serve as trade-offs for dictators. The paper is also guided by the following research questions: does the changing world polar system engenders democratic decline in Nigeria? If it does, what are the mechanism to curb it? Apart from the introduction and conclusion, the paper has the following parts: context and methodology, theorising Balance of Power (BoP) for democratic declines in Nigeria, conceptualising democracy, democracy in Africa, Nigeria democratic space and assessing the impact of contending weltanschauungen on the shrinking of democratic spaces in Nigeria.

2. Context and Methodology

The focus of this paper is on Nigeria and its democratic decline. However, Nigeria being a leading democracy in Africa, the paper broadly looked at and shows democratic trade-offs for African countries, which also accrue to Nigeria that Russia and China provide. These were not available before, particularly, since the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Nigeria is a leading member of African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), which outlaw unconstitutional means of taking over government. In Mali and Guinea, democratic infringements led to Coup d’état and both countries have been embraced by China and Russia. In January, 2022, China and Russia blocked ECOWAS sponsored United Nation’s sanctions on the

military junta in Mali (Nebenzia, 2022). Specifically, the paper showed democratic infringements in Nigeria, which are being done without fear of repercussions. Inherent in these Nigeria's infringements is the potential and anticipated support by Weltanschauungen of China and Russia for autocracy. , ILike that of the UN on Mali, this same opposition will be applied on any sanction or punishment on Nigeria. The period of the study is 2015-2022.

The paper is based on documentary method of data collection, which is a way of collecting data by reviewing existing documents, which could be either in form of primary documents or secondary documents. The former refers to eye-witness accounts and the later are documents produced by people who received eye-witness accounts to compile the documents. The Paper is a qualitative research work, which infers to a systematic process of obtaining data by analysing existing documents. It is often deployed by social scientists to evaluate a set of documents for historical or social value, or to generate a larger narrative through the study of numerous documents surrounding an event or individual (McCulloch cited in Okolie, Enyiazu and Nnamani 2021, p.4). Thus, "it is used to investigate, categorise, interpret, and identify limitations of physical sources, most commonly written documents whether in the private or public domain (personal papers, commercial records, or state archives, communications or legislation) (Payne & Payne cited in Okolie et al.).

This method is suitable for this paper because the information or data required for the paper are already in the public domain, it needs only to be refined, interpreted, evaluated and analysed in line with the research questions. The data are from official documents, books, journal articles, conference papers and so on that deals with democratic decline and trade-offs; leading powers' World Views and Nigeria's democratic infringements. Content analysis, rooted on systematic logical deductions will be used to systematically reduce these data to a logical, meaningful and coherent interpretation to answer the research questions: does the changing world polar system engenders democratic decline in Nigeria? And if it does, what are the mechanism to curb it?

2.1 Theorising Balance of Power (BoP) for Democratic Declines in Nigeria

The theoretical framework used for this paper is the BoP theory, a sub-set of the Realist theory. Morgenthau (2006, p.198), described:

"BoP as a protective device of alliance of nations, anxious for their independence, against another nation's designs for world domination, then called universal monarchy. B directly threatened by A, joins with C, D, E, potentially threatened by A, to foil A's design.

In the anarchical international system, there is a power-transition crisis period, which is when a sudden large shift in the distribution of power among states occurs (Eckstein2022), as it has happened to China and Russia. When it is accompanied by great violence, like the Russian/Ukrainian war: Russia is threatened by Ukrainian democracy. It is called a hegemonic war, which is a power-transition crises caused by attempt by a main actor (i.e. USA) to preserve its deteriorating position (liberal order/democracy) within the system. There are criticisms against BoP, amongst which is that it's view of interstate behaviour underrated the degree of common interest, interdependence, and collaboration that exist among modern states, as well the human desire for peace.

Certainly, democracies do not fall or rise in a global vacuum. Huntington's book, *The Third Wave*, validated the role international environment plays on dominant "norms, ideas, models, and trends, and how the policies and actions of powerful democracies—and their power *relative* to autocracies—shaped the global fate of freedom." (Diamond 2022, p.173). In the post-Cold War period (third wave of democracy), it was the "U.S. and European pressure, diplomatic engagement, and support (that) often tipped the balance toward a successful transition (or away from democratic demise)" (ibid.). During this period, the US was the "the unchallenged superpower . . . attended by its Western allies." (ibid. p.174).

In the world today, the Weltanschauung led by the USA, which sees sovereignty of states as contingent upon the observance of certain standards of governance (democracy, rule of law, human rights etc.), does no longer prevails; because of other contending Weltanschauungen. Pundits, policymakers, government analysts and scholars frequently and prominently argue that the United States has tumbled from its dominant position and a fundamental system-altering power shift away from Unipolarity has occurred (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016:7), which in 2014 was acknowledged by President Putin and President Jinping (Ibid).

As a corollary, China and Russia present trade-offs against the United States lead Order, which did not exist during the *third wave of democracy*. China and Russia are Siamese twins:

Chinese and Russian regimes share important features and interests...Each leader—and system—has broad contempt for the West and is determined to upend the liberal international order, which each detests. And each regime believes that the United States and, more broadly, the Western democracies are weak and irresolute, and therefore can be compromised, tested, and one day successfully confronted. Separately

and together, China and Russia are nurturing networks of authoritarian collusion and endeavouring to remake the global balance of power (Diamond 2022, P.176).

These determination to upend democracy and nurture autocracies is real, especially in Africa. Professor Okwudiba Nnoli noted that Africa countries' (Nigeria inclusive) domestic and external politics constitute a unity (2003, p.304), thus external environment influence Nigeria's domestic politics. Ajibola in buttressing this, also stated that Nigeria policies are constrained or influenced by the attitude of outer governments and world opinion (cited in Okolie 2015, p.15). Hence, in the USA Unipolar era in the 1990s, when the June 12, 1993 presidential election was annulled, the then military President, General I. B. Babagida literally 'ran away' from power because of international pressure and sanctions. Also on November 10, 1995, when Ken Saro Wiwa was killed, there was a unified condemnation by the international community, and Nigeria was made a pariah state, ostracised and under heavy doses of international sanctions.

Indeed, the world is no longer dominated by one Weltanschauung, but now has other Weltanschauungen that are opposed to democracy and serve as democratic trade-offs. This effects policies in Nigeria. Unlike the 1993 election annulment and Ken Sari Wiwa infractions. On October 20, 2020, at Lekki Lagos Tollgate, young Nigerians, waving Nigeria flags and singing National anthem were shot and killed and there was no whimpers from the international community, because there are now weltanschauungen bent on upending the democratic order. Therefore, the BoP framework suits this paper. It will be used to seek answers to the research questions: does the changing world polar system engenders democratic decline in Nigeria? If it does, what are the mechanism to curb it? And prove the hypotheses that the Weltanschauungen of Russia and China, which is anti-democracy is encouraging democratic shrinking in Nigeria. The next section deals with the conceptualization of democracy.

3. Conceptualising Democracy

Democracy has been defined differently by diverse scholars. This paper's definition of democracy aligned with the liberal representational model, which has verifiable fundamentals that in the midst of their lack, it could be confidently stated that democracy has dwindled. Therefore, the authors adopt Robert Dahl's polyarchy parametres of democracy, cited in Kurki (2010, p.367), which consist of regular and transparent electoral system, universal adult suffrage, freedom of association, information and inclusiveness. This definition highlights verifiable democratic institutional norms and procedural fundamentals of governance that can show at a glance whether a political system is democratic or not. Thus mere periodic holding of election alone, is not democracy. Accordingly democracies are states where liberty of the individual, representation, political equality, human rights, freedom from arbitrary power and consensus building are prioritised.

Autocratization on the other hand, expresses "any substance and significant worsening on the scales of liberal democracy", which are absence of liberty of the individual, representation, political equality, human rights, freedom from arbitrary power etc. (Anna, Sandra, Richard, Shreya & Staffan, 2019, p.896). Autocratization is on the rise globally, it attacks democratic foundations, even in the bastions of democracy by populist conservatives who work extremely hard against open and dissimilar culture. The centre of its network "is Putin's Russia, which has provided weapons, advisers, military and intelligence support to virtually any regime, no matter how awful to its own people, that opposes the US or the EU" (Fukuyama 2022, p.5).

As a result, in the world today democracy is on a downward spiral and authoritarianism is on the rise. The next section deals with the debate on the merits or demerits of democracy.

3.1 Arguments for and Against Democracy

The Singaporean leader, Lee Kuan Yew propagated a thesis that autocracies are better engines of economic growth and stability than democracies. Thus, there has been the debate if democracy is still the preferred way to go? Hence in 1999, the Indian economist Amartya Sen authoritatively rebutted Kuan Yew's thesis. He noted that Yew's thesis used selective, sporadic and faulty experimentation that overlooked the recurrent overwhelming developmental fiascos of autocracies. He declared that "the Lee argument failed on both intrinsic and instrumental grounds. Intrinsically...democracy is important because it meets essential human needs for political participation and freedom. Instrumentally, it gives people—not least, the poor—the ability to voice their needs and be heard." (Diamond 2022, p.165).

Similarly, there has been critique on why people would be eager to consent the course of their society to the collective wisdom of a flawed and often ill-advised public ('uninformed' people whose votes prevail in democracies)? To this Albright (2018, p. 117) countered "how could anyone be as gullible as to permanently entrust power—an inherently corrupting force—to a single leader and party?" As there is no legal way to stop a dictator (like Presidents Putin and Xiping) who abuse their authority, but if a free society falters, there is the mechanism

like open debate and the election (Presidents Putin and Xiping have abolished presidential tenure and censor open debate) for a new leader (which make it impossible for a new leader to emerge) to remedy those deficiencies.

Many African leaders have also argued that China became successful without democracy, and that African countries should do the same, because democracy, with all its checks and balances, encumbers growth (Cheeseman 2021). Professor Claude Ake, an Africa scholar of immense global repute wrote extensively on democracy in Africa. This paper adopts most arguments he made on democracy in Africa.

1) On what Africa needs is development not democracy, which will feed the hungry, heal the sick and give shelter to the homeless. Ake argued that:

the primary issue is not *whether* it is more important to eat well than to vote, but *who* is entitled to decide which is more important...In any case, to Ake Africa's failed developmental experience suggests that postponing democracy does not promote development; that during the past decades of authoritarianism, Africa's standard of living has been falling steadily, and its share of world trade and industrial output has been declining (Ake 1991.p.37).

2) On democracy being alien to Africa, Ake contended that :

the principles of democracy include widespread participation, consent of the governed, and public accountability of those in power and that traditional African political systems were infused with these democratic values. Standards of accountability were even stricter than in Western societies. Chiefs were answerable not only for their own actions but even for natural catastrophes such as famine, chiefs could be required to go into exile or "asked to die."(ibid. p35).

3) On African states being pluralistic for democracy to thrive due to ethnic differences, which provokes ethnic conflict; examples were given of Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, Burundi, Nigeria, and Rwanda, where ethnic differences have degenerated to wars, genocide and other serious crises. Ake argued that the problem is not ethnicity but bad leadership and elites that politicize ethnicity in their quest for power and political support and turn around to use it to justify political authoritarianism.

Professor Ake scolded African leaders for not seeing that repeating these arguments (that autocracy is more suited for Africa) after decades of its failure in Africa, which should serve as its refutation. For a treatment applied for decades that continues to worsen the illness cannot be right (ibid. p36).

Additionally democracy thrived in many pre-colonial African societies like the Igbos in Nigeria, the Kikuyus in Kenya and many others. Former South African President and a democratic sage, Dr Nelson Mandela acknowledged the role the Great Palace where he grew up played in his democratic credentials, he noted "...meetings at the great place exemplified democracy in its purest form. It was characterized by equal participation, equal privilege, fair hearing, justice, consensus building, consideration of minority and majority opinion" (Uzomba 2012, pp.246-7). And that this early experience guided his politics.

Consequently, democracy is not alien to Africa, neither is it not suited for Africa. Just as emphasized by professor Ake, African states have been ruled more by autocrats, still Africa is today more underdeveloped than at independent: this alone completely refute the notion that democracy is not suited for Africa, Nigeria inclusive. The next section discusses democracy in Africa.

3.2 Democracy in Africa

Africans have continued to show irrepressible desire for democracy. A survey of over thirty countries in Africa, including Nigeria by Afrobarometer for five consistent times since (2011-2021), kept on showing Africans' strong desire for democracy and their rejection of autocracy. It shows that seven in ten African interviewed prefer democracy over any other type of government; 75% is against military rule, 77% and 82 % against one-party and one-person rule (Gyimah-Boadi & Asunka 2021). Figure number 1 shows this.

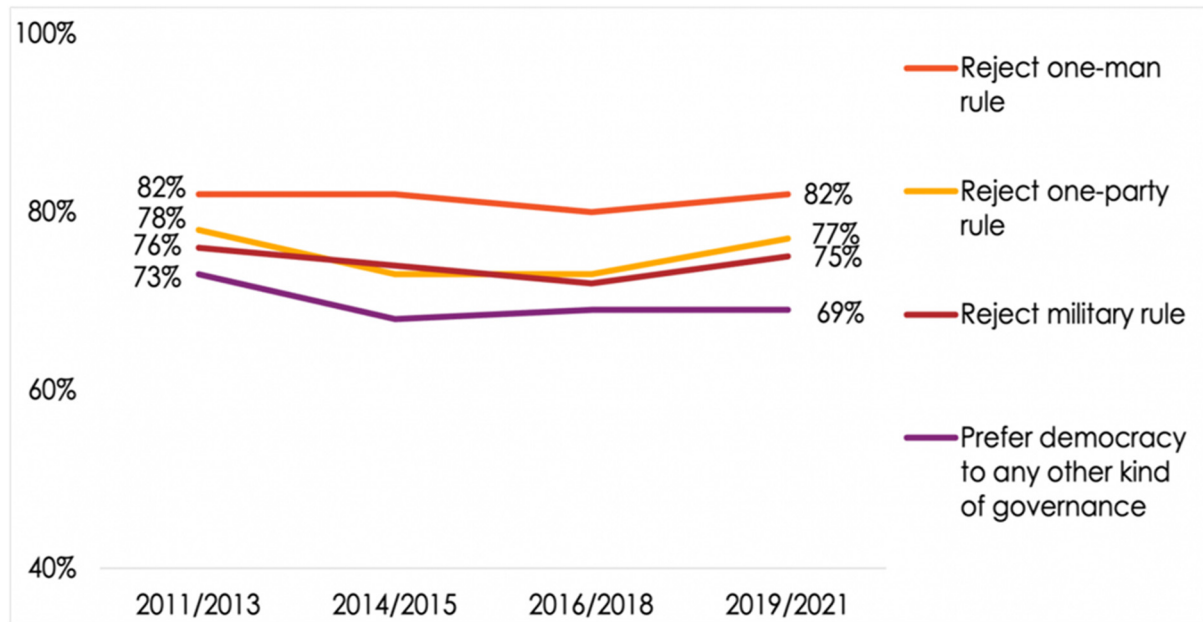


Figure 1. Preference for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives | 30 countries | 2011-2021

Source: Gyimah-Boadi & Asunka 2021

Consequently, in Africa, just like Ake noted, there is no evidence of widespread support for one-party states or authoritarian rule; rather there are displeasure on how democracy is practiced, which has led to stronger demands for accountable and representative government. Despite a number of coups, there have been democratic gains: 2021 saw opposition parties' triumph in Sao Tome and Principe and Zambia. The resilience of democracy in Africa, is not only being reinforced by Western governments; but is "deeply rooted in the hopes and aspirations that people have for their own countries." (Cheeseman 2021, p.2); the celebrated coups in Guinea and Mali were coups against leaders who undermined democracy.

However, smitten by one of the contending Weltanschauungen (the Beijing consensus) with its unconditional cooperation, which has provided African governments' access to finance, expertise and developmental aid. In 2016, the trade between China and Africa reached \$128bn, a drastic surge from \$1bn in 1980. And China's history of fast and successful economic growth is a model, which is appealing to many African states. In short, China is already winning the hearts and the minds of Africans (Maru 2019).

Accordingly, China's Weltanschauung employs three tools to undermine democracy in Africa: economic venture; advancement of Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-styled governance, and an unambiguous backing for political and electoral results favourable to China. On the first, China puts no democratic conditionality for its aids and assistance, which is opaque and reduce accountability. Since 2013 via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its unconditional ventures and assistances in Africa has substantially bridged Africa's \$108 billion annual infrastructure financing gap. Second, Heads of State and other governing elites are ensnared with travel, gifts and promised investment from Beijing and outright bribes. The CCP, since the 2000s has aggressively and overtly promoted China's governance model in Africa, by: party-to-party exchanges and technical trainings; export of surveillance technology and associated norms for citizens' control and information operations to shape the narratives around a country's partnership with China. These trainings provide attendees with a political education on norms of China's governance model. They include sessions on influencing public opinion, government-media relations, internet censorship, opposition monitoring, managing criticism of the party and fostering constituent loyalty (Scott 2021, pp.1-2).

Third, China's cybersecurity tools such as facial and license-plate recognition platforms etc. are being used in influencing African human rights and democratic practices. These are welcomed by democratic and authoritarian regimes alike in Africa. Nigerian government in 2021, sought Cyberspace Administration from China to build Nigeria's version of the Great Firewall. Nigeria First Lady, Aisha Buhari infamously stated, "If China can control over 1.3 billion people on social media, I see no reason why Nigeria cannot attempt controlling only 180 million

people.” (Scott 2021, p3). Zambia’s former President Edgar Lungu, used Chinese telecommunication giant Huawei security tools for digital surveillance of her citizens and censorship. South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC) and Kenya’s ruling Jubilee Party have budding relationships with the CCP.

On the other hand, Russia is also doing all things possible to impose its own Weltanschauung of governance in Africa, a Weltanschauung, which is: authoritarian, kleptocratic, and transactional that deploys mercenaries, disinformation campaigns, interfering in elections and bartering arms for resources. A useful prism to this Weltanschauung’s effects in Africa can be deduced by how African countries voted on the United Nations’ vote on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine: 28 of Africa’s 54 countries voted to condemn the invasion, 16 abstained and 9 did not vote. The voting showed four pattern:

- i. Those unwilling to condemn Russia—leaders who have been co-opted by Moscow.
- ii. Those that abstained or did not vote—leaders who have patronage ties with Russia; Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe, which profit from Russian arms, propaganda or political cover. They are anti-democratic, for democracy endanger their hold on power.
- iii. Those that abstained or did not vote—for ideological reasons rooted in their traditions of non-alignment. These included Morocco, Namibia, Senegal and South Africa.
- iv. Those that voted to condemn the invasion included leading African democracies. These comprised Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Malawi, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Kenya, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Zambia (Siegle 2022, p.5).

Nigeria is part and parcel of Africa and all the foregoing are applicable to Nigeria. The presence of China and Russia Weltanschauungen in Africa, give African countries, Nigeria inclusive, democratic trade-offs that were not available since the post-Cold War period. The next section is on Nigeria’s democratic space.

4. Nigeria Democratic Space

In a study by *Statista Research Department* on democracy in Nigeria, majority of Nigerians are in support democracy, however, 77.2% are of the view that Nigeria democracy is flawed (Statista Research Department February 1, 2022). Of the twelve largest democratic decline in the world, seven are in Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria is number five (Perspectives April 17, 2022). Democracy in Nigeria in spite of the façade that institutions of democracy like the legislature, which had always been on the frontline of attack by military dictators in Nigeria, is functioning and elections are held regularly.

Though, this fourth Republic is the longest democratic period: twenty-three years (May 29, 1999 to date) in Nigeria history. The First Republic lasted five years plus (October 1, 1960 to January 15, 1966); the Second Republic was for four years plus (October 1, 1979 to December 31, 1983) and the Third Republic was still born on June 23, 1993, when its presidential election was annulled. The Fourth Republic has seen a president that completed two terms in office (President Obasanjo) and handed over to a president who died in office (President Yar’Dua), his vice (President Jonathan) completed their term (2007-2011). President Jonathan contested and won the 2011 presidential election. And re-contested for second term in 2015, which he lost to the incumbent (President Buhari). Thus some may assume that democracy has matured in Nigeria, but that is not the case; indeed, Nigeria’s democracy may be said to be on life support.

Truly, if democracy is a government where the legitimacy of government is based on the obedience to laws, where leaders and the led enjoy freedom of speech, assembly, press and association. (Powell 1992), then Nigeria is in serious deficits. Protest in Nigeria is demonised and criminalised. Protesters are shot with live bullets on Nigeria streets in Abuja, Lagos, Aba, Onitsha etc. Rule of law is trampled upon; The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) was removed illegally (Enyiazu 2018), contrary to what the constitution says: that a CJN can only be removed with the senate’s two-third majority vote (Nigeria Const., 1999, as Amend. 2011, Section 292, sub. 1[a]). Houses of Supreme Court Justices and federal high court judges were invaded by federal agents and some of them taken to court contrary to the law, just to intimidate them. Judges, like military and para-military personnel that had to be given Orderly-Room Trial before they are released for civil trial; judges have to be convicted first, by the Nigeria Judicial Commission (NJC) before they will be subjected to civil trial. Journalist are persecuted, Agba Jalingo, a Nigerian journalist is on the list of World’s 10 'Most Urgent' Cases of Threats to Press Freedom and *Twitter* was banned for seven months plus for removing President Buhari’s tweet that infringes on its policy. Table 1 shows breaches and threats to democratic norms in Nigeria.

Table 1. Breaches of democratic norms from 2015 to 2022

S/N	Norm breached	Victims' Names	Dates	Action Against Victims	Sources
1	Separation of powers	National Assembly	August 7, 2018	Masked Operatives of DSS, invaded National Assembly to enforce the removal of Senate President Saraki	Jimoh, Abuh, Daka, Opara, & Ehiaghe (2018).
2	Protest and Assembly	IPOB Shiites Members EndSars	August 30, 2015-May 30, 2016 2015 and 2017-21 October 8-20, 2020	Security Agencies violently dispersed protesters with tear gas and live ammunition, killing 96, injuring 181 and many disappearing. Since over 350 members of IMN were massacred in Zaria in 2015, over 53 have been killed and 122 injured between 2021. Also killed was a Deputy Commissioner police and a Channel TV correspondent. Within the period, at least 56 people were reportedly killed across the country and about 38 allegedly killed on 20 October alone the army opened fire on thousands of protesters.	Amnesty International Amnesty International Amnesty International
3	Separation of powers	CJN Walter Nkannu Samuel Onnoghen, Justices Sylvester Ngwuta, Adeniyi Ademola, Nnamdi Digba, Ofili-Ajumogobia, Mohammed Yunusa, Hyeladzira Nganjiwa, James Agbadu-Fishim and Mary Odili.	January 25, 2019, October 7, 2016; 2016-2019.	Unlawful Removal The DSS invaded the houses of some of them, arrest one and wrongly put six on trial.	Ramon (2022) Adesina (2021) and Adesomoju (2016).
4	Rule of Law	Col. Dasuki RTD Shiites leader El-Zakzaky and Wife	Nov. 3 and Dec. 18, 2015. Dec. 2, 2016.	Refused to obey court order to release them	Okakwu (2017).
5	Free Speech	Twitter Journalists	June 5, 2021-January 13, 2022. May 29-2015-Dec. 2019	Banned 158 persons arrested, maimed, beaten etc. Agba Jalingo in World's 10 'Most Urgent' Cases of Threats to Press Freedom	Asemudara, (2021). Omoniyi (2019)

Source: Researchers' Compilation.

Another bedrock of democracy that has been flagrantly abused in Nigeria is what Levitsky & Ziblatt (2018, pp.102-

109) called Institutional Forbearance, which refers to “avoiding actions that, while respecting the letter of the law, obviously violate the spirit” it is all about eschewing dirty tricks or hardball tactics in the name of civility and fair play. An example given by Levitsky & Ziblatt, is the two terms convention set by the USA’s first President, George Washington, which was followed until the 1940s, when it was breached by President F. D. Roosevelt, which necessitated the 22nd Amendment of the US constitution (ibid). In United Kingdom, it can be likened to when a Prime Minister (PM) feels that he/she is no longer popular; he/she resigns. PM David Cameron did so when the Brexit vote was lost, PM T. May did same and lots of others previous PMs. However, PM Boris Johnson has fragrantly disregarded this norm and had deployed all manners of ‘dirty tricks/hardball tactics’ to stay in power, until the resignation of almost two-third of his cabinet members forced him to resign. Another example of it is lack of inclusiveness.

Consequently to avoid this scenario, Nigeria’s constitution in Section 14 (3) stated:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies (Nigeria Const., 1999, Amend. 2011).

There is no specificity of how to do this; but previous governments in Nigeria have tried to positively navigate this balance. Conversely this has been fragrantly abused since 2015. Currently, twelve out of sixteen heads of military and para-military agencies are Northerners and Muslims. Nigeria’s oil conglomerate, the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), has turned to ‘Northern Nigeria’s Petroleum Corporation, even when oil is not found in Northern Nigeria. All head of the three arms of government in Nigeria are Muslims, including the Speaker, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representative and the national chairman of the ruling APC. In the forthcoming 2023 presidential elections, the APC presidential candidate and vice are all Muslims. The South-West that had held the presidency for fifteen years plus (President Obasanjo and Vice President Osibanjo) is also given the presidential ticket of the ruling APC for another possible presidency for eight. While in 1999, a South-Easterner (Dr Ogbonnaya Onu) relinquished his All Peoples Party (APP) presidential ticket to a South-Westerner (Chief Olu Falae), for an all-South-West presidential tickets (President Obasanjo-PDP and Chief Olu Falae-AD-APP). This was done to ensure inclusiveness and that power moved to South-Western Nigeria. Table 2, gives more insight on breaches of institutional forbearance’s norms.

Table 2. Breaches on democratic inclusiveness

S/N	Offices	Details	Total							Source
1	Rotating of Political offices	Zones	NC	NE	NW	SE	SS	SW	Total	Compiled by the Researchers
		Presidency	--	--	10yrs	--	5yrs	8yrs	NC:12yrs	
		Vice President	--	8yrs	5yrs	--	3yrs	7yrs	NE:15yrs	
		Senate	12yrs	3yrs.	--	8yrs	--	--	NW: 23yrs	
		President								
		Speaker HoR	--	4	8yrs	--	--	7yrs	SE: 8yrs SS: 8yrs SW: 22yrs	
2.	Security Appointments	Military, Police, Paramilitary and Anti-Corruption Agencies Chiefs	North	South	Faith		4 Christians	16		Shehu (2021).
			12	4	12					
					Muslims					
3	NNPC	Top Management	24	12	NA		NA		36	
4	Federal Executive Council	Ministers of and Minister for.	Men		Women	Youth			Total	Compiled by the Researchers
			37		7	--			44	
5	Others	NA	President Buhari said in2015“The constituents, for example, that gave me 97 per cent [of the vote] cannot, in all honesty, be treated on some issues with constituencies that gave me five per cent,”			APC	Presidential candidate is doing Muslim-Muslim Ticket			Adesina (2021).

Source: Researchers' Compilation.

Democratic setbacks in Nigeria today are not driven by overt coup d'état, rather it is occurring through incremental steps and often under a 'legal façade', as argued by Polyakova, Taussig, Reinert, Kirişci Sloat, Kirchick, Hooper, Eisen, & Kenealy (2019), "Political ideas that expose the importance of individual liberties, minority rights, and the separation of power across levers of government—and democratic institutions—processes that translate popular will into public policy through legitimate elections—are being pulled apart", This is expertly what is happening in Nigeria. Nigeria has to beware! The first military dictatorship in Nigeria took a civil war (1967-1970), blood of millions of Nigeria and thirteen years plus of military rule (January 15, 1966- October 1, 1979), to get the military back to the barrack. The second one (December 13, 1983-May 29, 1999), took many struggles, killing of Nigerians, a near civil war (the Abiola crisis, caused by the annulment of June 12, 1993 Presidential election, which had a Muslim-Muslim ticket too), the death of a Head of State and an International system (Unipolar/democracy third wave) to restore democracy in Nigeria.

4.1 Assessing the Impact of Contending Weltanschauungen on the Shrinking of Democratic Space in Nigeria

In consonant with the research questions: does the changing world polar system engenders democratic decline in Nigeria? If it does, what are the mechanism to curb it? And its corresponding hypotheses that: the changing polar

system, with its accompanying contending Weltanschauungen engenders Nigeria's shrinking democratic space. And consequently, Nigeria has to look inward for the survival of her democracy.

Indeed, there are three conspicuous contending Weltanschauungen in the anarchical world system today: the West that prioritised democracy; China and Russia that are anti-democratic. This is unlike the 'third wave of democracy' period that was Unipolar (US led), when autocratic governments were on decline. Currently despite African Union (AU) and other regional organisations' criminalization of undemocratic takeover of government, military coups are happening in Africa and are running smoothly. In January, 2022, China and Russia at the UN, blocked ECOWAS sponsored sanctions on the military junta in Mali (Nebenzia, 2022). In spite of regional organisations (like ECOWAS) effort to push them out of power, these undemocratic governments have been given life-wire and support, by Russia in Mali and Burkina Faso. Nigerian government has also been given support by China in her democracy shrinking antics, like the Nigerian government quest to acquire Nigeria's version of the Great Firewall to enable it gag her citizens.

Nigeria's domestic and external politics constitute a unity (Nnoli, 2003); thus external environment influence Nigeria's domestic politics. This was buttressed by Ajibola, who stated that Nigeria policies are constrained and influenced by the attitude of outer governments and world opinion (cited in Okolie 2015, p.15). Example, during the USA Unipolar era of the 1990s, when the June 12, 1993 election was annulled, the then military President, General I. B. Babagida was literally 'chased away' from power because of international pressure and sanctions. Also after the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa, the condemnation by the international community was strident and Nigeria was made a pariah state.

Conversely, unlike the unipolar era that serious repercussions from the international community were meted on Nigeria, the October 20, 2020, Lekki Lagos Tollgate killing of young Nigerians, drew no whimpers from the international community. The shooting of Muslim Shiites on the street of Abuja is continuing without a whimper from the international community; likewise the shooting and killing of IPOB demonstrators by agents of the state. All these non-reaction by the international system is because there are weltanschauungen bent on upending democratic order globally, especially in Africa, including Nigeria.

Bewilderingly, these democratic breaches as shown in table 1, did not attract corresponding repercussion from the international community. And the Nigeria state is encouraged to continue in her democratic breaches, because the world system that constrains Nigeria's policies, now has Weltanschauungen that support democratic breaches, which emboldens Nigeria. Hence the current contending Weltanschauungen engenders the shrinking of Nigeria's democratic spaces, which confirms our first hypothesis and answers the paper's first research question.

In Continuation, the second research question poses: If the contending Weltanschauungen engender the shrinking of Nigeria's democratic spaces; what are the mechanisms to curb it? With it corresponding hypothesis: Nigeria has to look inward to sustain her democracy. Table 2 dwells on breaches of Institutional Forbearance, which includes lack of inclusiveness. Egypt gives a vivid example of what lack of inclusiveness can do to a democracy. Nassif, (2016:12-14) stated that the extreme polarization of politics under late Egyptian President Morsy made military comeback possible in Egypt. Nassif opined that the Brothers (the Egyptian President party) prior to the 2012 presidential elections were accommodative to other groups; but when their candidate became president of Egypt, the Brothers chose a different path. The government they formed in August 2012 was headed by a Muslim Brother, Hisham Qandil, and stacked with Brothers. As shown in table 2, this is what the All Progressive Congress (APC) government has been doing in Nigeria. Nigerians have to gild their loins to defend Nigeria's democracy; thus to avoid this Egyptian path before their democracy is truncated. Diamond (2022, p.168) gave an insight on what could be done in the midst of weak laws, courts, bureaucracies, and other formal institutions, thus:

This can only be done by the conscious work of leaders, organizations, and reform coalitions, sometimes with the assistance of other states and outside institutions. Political and civic agency, strategy, and choice—or to use a word strangely rare in political science these days, "leadership"—matter. Most success stories have benefited from capable and dedicated (though hardly angelic) leaders who were committed to democracy, respectful of its institutions, and savvy about building and broadening coalitions and gradually strengthening institutions.

Just like Levitsky & Ziblatt (2018, pp.216-7) advised, if there are institutional pathways, democrapreneurs should avail themselves of this path. Because, using unconstitutional path "erodes their public support and strengthen the hands of the budding autocrat." Nigeria is a vivid example, in November 1993, politicians, including the Vice-Presidential candidate in the June 12, 1993 presidential election, colluded with General S. Abacha, to overthrow the then interim government. Gen. Abacha later became the deadliest military dictator Nigeria ever had and it took his death to restore democracy in Nigeria. Levitsky & Ziblatt gave examples

of “Venezuela, when the opposition in April 2002 backed a military coup against Hugo Chavez and boycotted the 2005 elections”, which enabled Chavez to consolidate power. The reverse was the case “in Colombia against Uribe....(the opposition) concentrated on the legislature and the court and in February 2010, the constitutional court struck down his (Uribe’s) third term bid as unconstitutional, which forced him to step down after two terms.”(Ibid.).

Nearer Nigeria, the Zambians “In the 2021 elections, the people voted to save democracy,” (Hichilema cited in Akinpelu 2021). In Zambia the regime of Mr Lungu’s ruling Patriotic Front (PF) breached democratic tenets by indulging in human rights abuses, corruption etc. The economy was down and there was massive unemployment, especially among the youths, many have been unemployed for more than five years. Zambian currency the Zambian kwacha became almost worthless, which forced the introduction of high value denominations: 20,000 and 50,000 kwacha bills (Akinpelu 2021). The condition in Zambia sounds like that of Nigeria’s. Thus, like Zambians, who did not depend on external help or sought military solution, rather they took their destiny in their own hands, and voted out President Lungu’s party. Nigeria should do same, by internally working for Nigeria’s democratic survival. Thus the second hypothesis is confirmed: Nigeria has to look inward to sustain her democracy, not externally.

The leadership in Nigeria is failing or has failed in engendering democracy. Therefore ‘political and civic agency’ have to double down in their defence and advocacy for democracy, and just like they forced the government to sign the 2022 Electoral Act. They should do more even to challenge the government lopsided appointments in courts, including the Muslim-Muslim APC presidential tickets. And the Nigeria electorates should be mobilised to vote out any government or political party that does not stimulate democracy and development of the Nigerian state.

5. Conclusion

Indeed, democracy is on the decline globally, due essentially to the Russia and China weltanschauungen, which oppose democracy and engender autocracy globally. However, unlike former US President, D. Trump, who admired and displayed anti-democratic tendencies, the incumbent President J. Biden, fully support democracy. In December, 2021, he summoned a summit where institutions and countries that are pro-democratic, deliberated on democratic ends, how to confront its threats around the world, and establish “an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal.” (White House Briefing, December 23, 2021).

Recently, also PM Johnson was forced to resign. These are signs that democracies, despite anti-democratic models working against them, are not giving-up.

Likewise, Nigeria’s civil societies, democratic activists and others should not relent in confronting anti-democratic forces in Nigeria, especially the presidency and the ‘rubber-stamp’ National Assembly. For the worst dictatorship is a civilian dictatorship. No illegal means should be use, for it will make them lose legitimacy from the people; as it happened in Venezuela, when the opposition supported a military coup against President Chavez, who when the coup failed consolidated power to a full blown autocracy and see where Venezuela is today. In Nigeria, Gen. Abacha metamorphosed to a very brutal dictator.

The Nigerian Judiciary, in spite of government intimidation has remain resilient, in 2018 a Federal High Court in the case of Charles Oputa alias Charley Boy Vs. Nigerian Police Force held that using teargas or water cannons on peaceful protesters was inhuman and a degrading treatment. All the judges illegally taken to court, were all freed by the court (Ramon, 2022).

The paper concludes that civil societies, democratic activists etc. should regularly challenge breach of democratic norms and lack of inclusiveness by the government in court. For if Nigeria loses its democracy; there are trade-offs in Russia and China governance models to support dictatorship in Nigeria. Egypt is an example, where their democracy was truncated for lack of inclusiveness and pandering to Islamic Fundamentalism and the culprit General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has transmogrified to a civilian president and is now fully integrated within the comity of nations.

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