



BACKGROUND PAPER

Democracy in West Africa or West African Democracy?

**Rethinking Liberal Democracy in the Face of Citizens' Discontents
and an Emergent Military Wave**

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Introduction

Concerns over democratic decline and the rise of authoritarianism have been on the front burner of global democracy discourse in the past decade.¹ These concerns have reached a new dimension in West Africa in recent times following growing public discontent with governments around the region and the rise of military coups. In 2023 alone, there were seven coup incidents (successful and attempted) across six countries on the continent, with five of these occurring in four West African countries – Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Amidst widespread dissatisfaction with the 2023 general elections in Nigeria,² a coup ensued in the neighboring Niger Republic on July 26th, 2023.³ This was followed by another exactly 5 weeks later, on August 30th, 2023, in Gabon, another country in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴ Within the same year, there were attempted coups in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.⁵ These coups combine with the already existing military regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea to signal an impending threat of reversal to an era of military dominance in the West African sub-region.

The rise of military coups constitutes a single, albeit the most severe, manifestation of democratic decline. The literature on the subject treats democratic decline not just as the occurrence of military coups but also as the use of institutions to restrict citizens' rights and political participation.⁶ Democratic decline has been associated with executive aggrandizement (where an incumbent executive and political party exert control over democratic institutions, weaken checks and balances and limit opposition), elite collusion (where incumbents, allied officials and corporate leaders work to co-opt opposition leaders and

¹ See Puddington, Arch. *Breaking down democracy: Goals, strategies, and methods of modern authoritarians*. Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2017.; Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. *How democracies die*. Crown, 2019.

² Bola A. Akinterinwa. Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election and Problematic Magouilles: Foreign Policy Implications. *This Day*. (5 March 2023). <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/05/nigerias-2023-presidential-election-and-problematic-magouilles-foreign-policy-implications>

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/8/20/timeline-what-has-happened-in-niger-since-the-coup>

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/military-coup-detat-in-gabon/>

⁵ <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/africa-2023-the-year-of-coupsand-a-near-coup-16414797>

⁶ <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2024/01/democratic-decline-global-phenomenon-even-wealthy-nations>; McCaffrie, Brendan, and Sadiya Akram. "Crisis of Democracy?: Recognizing the Democratic Potential of Alternative Forms of Political Participation." *Democratic Theory* 1, no. 2 (2014): 47-55.

independent media through patronage and spoils) and self-coup or autogolpe (where executives close or neutralize democratic institutions like courts and legislatures to centralize power and eliminate accountability).⁷ These manifestations are palpable in governments across the world, especially those in West African.

In Nigeria for example, it is arguable that all three manifestations of democratic backsliding are present to varying degrees. Issues of excessive executive influence, elite collusion, and manipulation of democratic institutions to eliminate accountability have been reiterated by scholars as well as civil society actors.⁸ Public discontent with state institutions has been palpable, especially during the #ENDSARS protests⁹ and the aftermath of the 2023 general elections. All three arms of government – legislature, executive and judiciary – are subject to suspicion. The EMB, INEC, is widely viewed with distrust. There is pervasive corruption within political parties, manifesting in a lack of internal democracy, and resulting in fluid loyalties even amongst major party stakeholders. Even security apparatuses of the state are subject to loathe amongst a large section of citizens. While the country has not had to contend with a major threat of military incursion in its fourth republic, the massive dissatisfaction with state institutions signals a need for preemptive efforts toward stopping the emergent turn away from democracy.

This expert convening is an exercise aimed at promoting democratic governance in West Africa and hopefully, the entire African continent. The approach is broadly to situate the failings of democracy in the continent on the failure of prevailing democratic practices to meet the developmental needs of the region. Specific objectives are to identify shortcomings of the liberal democratic model as practiced in West Africa, frame a model that addresses these shortcomings, and propose ways to ensure that democracy addresses the developmental needs of the region. These objectives inform the following questions:

- i) What are the shortcomings of the current democratic model?

⁷ <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2024/01/democratic-decline-global-phenomenon-even-wealthy-nations>

⁸ Baba, Yahaya T. "Executive dominance and hyper-presidentialism in Nigeria." *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics* (2018): 257.; Ozohu-Suleiman, Abdulhamid, and Shehu Mustapha Liberty. "Elite Collusion and African Governance System: A Critique of Democracy and Development in Nigeria."; Zainawa, Abdullahi Yahuz. "Political Parties, Electoral Process and Democracy in Nigeria." *Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development* 2, no. 1 (2021): 10-10.

⁹ Samuel Igba. three years after #EndSARS protests: Progress and prospects. *The Guardian*. (17 October 2023). <https://guardian.ng/opinion/three-years-after-endsars-protests-progress-and-prospects/>

- ii) How do we transcend from practising ‘democracy in West Africa’ which is not tailored to the existential conditions in the continent and has failed to address African needs to a socio-culturally, economically, and politically relevant ‘West-African democracy’ which meets the aspirations of the region?
- iii) How best can democratic practice in West Africa be framed to address the developmental needs of the sub-region?

To set the stage for the conversations, this paper lays some background issues on the links between democracy, development, and growing citizens’ discontent across the African continent. We begin by attempting to explain the disconnect between democracy and development in Africa.

On Democracy and Development in Africa

The turn to the military in the aftermath of the independence of many African countries was accompanied by widespread activism by progressives across the continent. There were vocal calls by citizens and advocacy groups for military governments to transfer power to civilian administrators. In line with the fundamental idea of participation underlying democratic governance, citizens had expectations that a power shift to democratically elected governments would herald better guarantees of freedom and improved developmental outcomes. There was widespread buy-in for the narrative that democracy supports development by encouraging political stability, citizen involvement, and the preservation of individual rights, all of which contribute to a climate conducive to economic and social advancement.¹⁰

Paradoxically, following decades of democratic governance in Nigeria and other African states, the country and entire region have remained trapped in a web of seemingly intractable development crises. A clear pointer to the pervasive development crisis on the continent can be found in the number of least developed countries on the continent. As of 2021, 45 countries were designated by the United Nations as least developed countries (LDCs).¹¹ Of the 45 LDCs, 33 including Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia are on the African continent. With 33 of the 54 African countries categorized as least developed, and over 70% of LDCs globally located in the African continent, the pervasiveness of underdevelopment on the continent is self-evident.

¹⁰ Sharma, Shalendra D. "Democracy, good governance, and economic development." *Taiwan journal of democracy* 3, no. 1 (2007): 29-62.

¹¹ UNCTAD. Crisis-resilient development finance: The least developed countries report. 2023. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2023_en.pdf, p. xiii

Given the well-established linkages between democracy and development, the paradox of widespread underdevelopment despite the continent's purported democratic practice piques interest in what accounts for democracy's inability to generate development. To answer this question, Ake's work on Democracy and Development in Africa comes in handy.¹² Ake had, in 1996, presented a convincing argument that democracy on the continent is devoid of a developmental agenda. For him, leadership on the continent has been preoccupied with the desire to gain and cling to power so much that the task of developmental agenda-setting had been initially ignored completely. The subsequent need to shift public attention from demands for redistribution led African leaders to introduce an ideology of development which served not as a basis for societal transformation but as a tool for consolidating the hold on power and ensuring the survival of the leadership class. The onus then fell on the West to supply a development agenda which ultimately, birthed a confusion of agendas in the continent. With no tangible indigenous efforts at development, the continent in general, and particularly, Nigeria has remained almost entirely reliant on Western direction. Western development and democratic assistance programmes have, therefore, almost entirely drowned out homegrown approaches to development in the continent. As a result, socio-political and economic practices in the continent have been largely shaped, not by internal dynamics within the continent but by a complex intersection of external determinism, the desperate internal pursuit of power, and political rhetorics directed at generating public support.

The internal developmental paradigm and governance system is consequently a flawed adaptation of Western liberal models. The economy of the continent is based largely but not completely on a liberal market economic system and its governance system is theoretically based on a liberal democratic system but practically an anomaly that is difficult to describe either as a liberal or electoral democracy. The consequence has been the flurry of flaws (electoral flaws, lack of accountability, inept and corrupt leadership, deepening cleavages and fault lines, shrinking public space, and a general absence of liberal democratic values). Another notable flaw with democracy as practiced on the continent is the tendency for incumbents to manipulate their tenure, mostly through referendums intended to amend the constitution, as was done in Guinea 2020.

The point is that, despite the professed turn to democracy, public participation in governance has been a mere rhetoric and the need for development has been

¹² Ake, C. (1996) Democracy and Development in Africa. Washington D. C.: The Brookings Institution.

largely sacrificed on the altar of parochial sectional interests of political leaders. Citizens are unable to contribute meaningfully to government processes, their rights and freedoms are repeatedly violated and there is growing disenchantment with democracy in the country. These shortcomings therefore formed a basis for indignation and openness to a reversal to authoritarian regimes.

2.2 Manifestations of Citizens' Discontent

The narrative of 'failed' or 'failing' democratic regimes' is often advanced by 'coupists' to justify their seizure of power. As one may expect, the failure of governance on the continent to improve the quality of life of citizens has created a situation wherein coupists are sometimes lauded as saviours. From Niger to Gabon, reports have shown that citizens, albeit not all, rejoiced over the military takeover.¹³ This presents a paradox: the people who ought to be active participants in the governance and who ought to be major beneficiaries under democratic rule are rejoicing over an overthrow of the system.

Within the Nigerian state, public dissatisfaction with the government of the day and its associated (democratic) institutions has remained palpable. Developmental challenges, pervasive poverty, and reduced trust in public institutions climaxed in country-wide #ENDSARS protests in 2020. Also, there is pervasive disillusionment with democratic institutions like the election management body, the legislature, political parties, and even civil society organisations, amongst others. These all indicate a need to rethink the practice of democracy in Nigeria and on the African continent. This need is further validated by stark evidence of links between developmental crisis and military coups as shown in the section below.

2.3 Development Crisis and Coups in Africa

A cursory analysis of coup incidents vis a vis the developmental status of countries on the African continent reveals that coups tend to occur more in the least developed states. Almost half (15) of the 36 countries identified as least developed in Africa by the UN have experienced a coup or an attempted coup between 2010 and 2023. More so, most of the coups that have been experienced on the continent occurred in least-developed countries. In addition, in the period between 2020 and 2023, there have been 21 coup incidents in 12 countries. Nine of these countries are least developed countries, some of which have experienced

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66657571>

up to 3 coup incidents within the 4-year space. The summary of coup incidents by developmental status across countries and sub-regions in Africa is laid out in the table below:

Table: Number of Coup Incidents in Africa from 2020 to 2023

| S/N | Countries | Development Status ¹⁴ | No. of Incidents | Sub-Region |
|-----|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Mali | LDC | 3 | West Africa |
| 2 | Central African Republic | LDC | 1 | Central Africa |
| 3 | Niger Republic | LDC | 2 | West Africa |
| 4 | Tunisia | LMIC | 1 | North Africa |
| 5 | Guinea Bissau | LDC | 2 | West Africa |
| 6 | Sudan | LDC | 3 | North Africa |
| 7 | Burkina Faso | LDC | 3 | West Africa |
| 8 | Sierra Leone | LDC | 2 | West Africa |
| 9 | Gabon | UMIC | 1 | Central Africa |
| 10 | Guinea | LDC | 1 | West Africa |
| 11 | Gambia | LDC | 1 | West Africa |
| 12 | Sao Tome and Principe | LMIC | 1 | Central Africa |
| | <u>Total</u> | | <u>21</u> | |

As can be gleaned from the table above, although countries in various levels of development have experienced coups, coups are more prevalent in the least developed states. Pervasive poverty, unemployment, economic hardships, and other adverse conditions that are associated with underdevelopment increase the likelihood of frustration with the government of the day and serve as a possible propane for a military takeover. This poses a challenge for other countries in West Africa that are currently under democratic civilian democratic regimes but continue to be characterized by the indices of underdevelopment.

¹⁴ Note: LDC here means Least Developed Country; LMIC means Lower Middle Income Country; and UMIC means Upper Middle Income Country.

2.4 Sanctions, National Sovereignty and Regional Integration

Military takeovers are often followed by efforts to restore civilian rule. For the West African sub-region, these efforts have been manifested in ECOWAS' sanctions on countries under military rule. ECOWAS, responded to the 9 coups in Niger, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Paris Sudan Guinea and Mali since 2020¹⁵, with sanctions till they return to democracy¹⁶. These sanctions range from suspension from the organisation, imposition of travel bans on members of the government and even the broader citizenry, freezing of financial assets, and even trade restrictions.¹⁷

The effectiveness of these sanctions, have however, been called to question given recent move by Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali to withdraw from the regional body, rather than accede to calls to return to civilian rule.¹⁸ In the joint statement by these countries signaled an assertion of national sovereignty and dissatisfaction with the regional bloc as well as its push for democratic rule. These beget further concerns about regional cooperation amongst countries in the region while simultaneously calling the state of democracy in the sub-region into question. What is the fate of Democracy in the sub-region? How best can countries be dissuaded from jettisoning participatory governments in favour of military-led leadership? These issues, amongst others, provide a basis for this convening to rethink democracy in Nigeria.

¹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/9/22/africas-coup-epidemic-has-democracy-failed-the-continent>

¹⁶ <https://www.africanews.com/2023/08/30/africa-the-7-military-coups-over-the-last-three-years/>

¹⁷ <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/rest-of-africa/ecowas-maintains-sanctions-on-three-countries-4131406>; <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/17/africa/ecowas-sanction-guinea-mali-coups-intl/index.html>; <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/rest-of-africa/ecowas-maintains-sanctions-on-three-countries-4131406>

¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68122947>

Conclusion

The background issues laid out above establishes some links between democracy, development and citizens' discontent in West Africa. Beyond coups which have been extensively treated in this background paper, there have been questions on equating civilian rule with democracy. Also, the extent to which liberal democratic values are adhered to, as well as its fitness for the West African context is a major area of concern.

Ultimately, the intricate web of questions and concern signals a need for this convening. There is a need to for steps towards prevention of a reversal of gains made from struggles that brought an end to the era of military dominance in the region, and to chart a workable pathway for improved democratic experience that would translate to better living conditions for the average citizen, and resultantly, enjoy wider public support.

Appendix

Incidents of Coups in Africa from 2020 to 2023

| S/N | Event | Date | Type | Country | Coup leaders | Head of State/Government | Election Year |
|-----|--|---------------------|---------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | 2020 Malian coup d'état ¹⁹ | 18 – 19 August 2020 | Coup | Mali | Col. Assimi Goïta | President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta Prime Minister Boubou Cissé | 19 th April 2020 ²⁰ |
| 2 | 2020–21 Central African Republic coup d'état attempt ²¹ | 17 Dec 20–13 Jan 21 | Attempt | Central African Republic | Ex-president François Bozizé | President Faustin-Archange Touadéra | 27 December 2020 |
| 3 | 2021 Nigerien coup d'état attempt ²² | 31-Mar-21 | Attempt | Niger | Captain Sani Saley Gourouza | Mahamadou Issoufou | 27 December 2020 |
| 4 | 2021 Malian coup d'état ²³ | 24-May-21 | Coup | Mali | Col. Assimi Goïta | President Bah Ndaw Prime Minister Moctar Ouane | 29 July 2018 |

¹⁹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mali-coup-president-ibrahim-boubacar-keita-arrested-prime-minister-mutiny/>, <https://thefederal.com/international/malis-president-resigns-on-tv-after-military-coup/>

²⁰ The second rounds of Parliamentary elections in Mali was held on this date. The first round was on 29th March, 2020.

²¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/19/armed-rebel-groups-in-c-africa-form-coalition>, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-centralafrica-security-idUSKBN29I1Y1/>

²² <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210331-soldiers-arrested-in-niger-after-attempted-coup>

²³ <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210525-mali-junta-leader-says-transitional-president-pm-have-been-stripped-of-duties>, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/24/mali-president-prime-minister-and-defence-minister-arrested-sources-say>

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|-----------|--|----------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 5 | 2021 Tunisian self-coup | 25-Jul-21 | Self-Coup | Tunisia | President Kais Saied | Tunisian Parliament | 15 September 2019 |
| 6 | 2021 Guinean coup d'état | 05-Sep-21 | Coup | Guinea | Col. Mamady Doumbouya | President Alpha Condé | 10 March 2019 |
| 7 | September 2021 ²⁴ Sudanese coup d'état attempt | 21-Sep-21 | Attempt | Sudan | Unknown | Sovereignty Council of Sudan | April 13 – 16 2015 |
| 8 | October–November 2021 Sudanese coup d'état ²⁵ | 25-Oct-21 | Coup | Sudan | Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan | Abdalla Hamdok | April 13 – 16 2015 |
| 9 | January 2022 Burkina Faso coup d'état | 24-Jan-22 | Coup | Burkina Faso | Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba | Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. ^{26, 27} | 22 November 2020 |
| 10 | 2022 Guinea-Bissau coup d'état attempt | 01-Feb-22 | Attempt | Guinea Bissau | Unknown | Umaro Sissoco Embaló. ²⁸ | 29 December 2019 |
| 11 | 2022 Malian coup d'état attempt | 16–17 May 2022 | Attempt | Mali | Western Backed military officers | Assimi Goïta | 29 March 2020 |
| 12 | September 2022 Burkina Faso coup d'état | 30-Sep-22 | Coup | Burkina Faso | Capt. Ibrahim Traoré | Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. ²⁹ | 22 November 2020 |

²⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58629978>

²⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59033142>

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/BBCAfrica/status/1485671514825445381>

²⁸ <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220201-gunfire-heard-and-armed-men-seen-near-seat-of-government-in-guinea-bissau>

²⁹ <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220517-mali-s-military-junta-says-it-foiled-an-attempted-coup>

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|-------------------|---------|-----------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 13 | 2022 São Tomé and Príncipe coup d'état attempt ³⁰ | 24-25 Nov 22 | Attempt | São Tomé and Príncipe | Arlecio Costa Delfim Neves | Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada | 25 September 2022 ³¹ |
| 14 | 2022 Gambian coup d'état attempt ³² | 20-Dec-22 | Attempt | The Gambia | LCpl Sanna Fadera | President Adama Barrow | 4 December 2021 |
| 15 | 2023 Sudan conflict ³³ | 15 Apr 23-ongoing | Attempt | Sudan | Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo | Abdel Fattah al-Burhan | April 13 – 16 2015 |
| 16 | 2023 Nigerien coup d'état ³⁴ | 26-28 Jul23 | Coup | Niger | Col Amadou Abdramane and Gen Abdourahamane Tchiani | President Mohamed Bazoum | 27 December 2020 |
| 17 | 2023 Sierra Leone coup ³⁵ plot | 31-Jul-23 | Attempt | Sierra Leone | Unknown | President Julius Maada Bio | 24 June 2023 |
| 18 | 2023 Gabonese coup d'état ³⁶ | 30-Aug-23 | Coup | Gabon | Gen. Brice Oligui | President Ali Bongo Ondimba | 26 August 2023 |

³⁰ <https://web.archive.org/web/20221205221103/https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/25/coup-attempt-thwarted-in-sao-tome-and-principe>, <https://web.archive.org/web/20221202185636/https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/sao-tome-principe-government-thwarts-overnight-coup-attempt-2022-11-25/>

³¹ Parliamentary Elections were held on this date while Presidential elections had been hitherto held on 18 July 2021

³² <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/gambia-foils-military-coup-arrests-four-soldiers-govt-2022-12-21/>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64063090>

³³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-65284945>, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/15/africa/sudan-presidential-palace-intl/>, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/sudan-khartoum-military.html>, <https://www.npr.org/2023/04/15/1170249456/gunfire-and-explosions-erupt-across-sudans-capital-as-military-rivals-clash>

³⁴ https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/niger/niger-ce-que-l-on-sait-de-la-tentative-de-coup-d-etat-en-cours-contre-le-president-mohamed-bazoum_5973206.html, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/soldiers-nigers-presidential-guard-blockade-presidents-office-security-sources-2023-07-26/>

³⁵ <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20230801/9146693/sierra-leona-detiene-militares-planeaban-atacar-instituciones.html>, https://ground.news/article/in-sierra-leone-police-arrested-suspects-in-the-coup-attempt_b9ebd2, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/coup-attempt-sierra-leone-police-confirms-arrest-of-19-people-including-top-security-officials>, <https://dubawa.org/sierra-leones-alleged-coup-plot-the-facts-and-fictions/>

³⁶ <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20230830-gabon-apr%C3%A8s-annonce-de-la-r%C3%A9%C3%A9lection-Ali-Bongo-des-militaires-proclament-annulation-du-scrutin>

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|------------------|---------|---------------|---|---|--------------------|
| 19 | 2023 Burkina Faso coup d'état attempt ³⁷ | 26-Sep-23 | Attempt | Burkina Faso | Dissidents of the Burkina Faso Armed Forces | President Ibrahim Traoré | 2020 |
| 20 | 2023 Sierra Leone coup attempt ³⁸ | 26-Nov-23 | Attempt | Sierra Leone | Unknown | President Julius Maada Bio | 24 June 2023 |
| 21 | 2023 Guinea-Bissau coup d'état attempt | 30 Nov-01 Dec 23 | Attempt | Guinea Bissau | Victor Tchongo | President Umaro Sissoco Embaló. ^{39, 40} | 2023 ⁴¹ |

³⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/28/burkina-fasos-military-rulers-say-coup-attempt-foiled-plotters-arrested>

³⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67558078>

³⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/2/guinea-bissau-president-says-this-weeks-violence-was-attempted-coup>

⁴⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67586556>

⁴¹ Legislative elections were held on June 4, 2023 (see <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/8/guinea-bissau-opposition-wins-overall-majority-in-parliament-vote>). Presidential elections are to be held in 2024



...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity

ABOUT THE ELECTORAL FORUM

The Electoral Forum is an initiative of The Electoral Hub that brings together resource persons from electoral management bodies together with other electoral stakeholders to conceptualise solutions to the unique problems facing electoral governance in Nigeria. It is chaired by Professor Adebayo Olukoshi and supported by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and the MacArthur Foundation.

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