

# AFRO BAROMETER

**Working Paper No. 48**

**THE DURABILITY OF POLITICAL  
GOODS?  
EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA'S  
NEW DEMOCRACY**

by Michael Bratton and Peter Lewis

**A comparative series of national public  
attitude surveys on democracy, markets  
and civil society in Africa.**



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**April 2005**

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# **The Durability of Political Goods?**

## **Evidence from Nigeria's New Democracy**

### **ABSTRACT**

Conventional wisdom suggests that, for new democracies to survive, citizens must receive the benefits of socioeconomic development. Yet an emerging literature shows that, following democratic transitions, the delivery of political goods such as order, civil rights and good governance, can sustain a new regime, at least in the short run. But how long does any such honeymoon last? This paper uses survey data over time to assess the durability of various types of public goods in shaping popular attitudes to democracy in Nigeria, a critical test case where democracy is under threat. We find that, even under unfavorable conditions, political goods are more durable than previously thought and that mass preferences for democracy do not require an economic miracle. To be sure, economic assessments of policy performance shape evolving views about the supply of democracy; over time, however, political assessments of the trustworthiness of national leaders are equally important.

“Man shall not live by bread alone.”

*New Testament*, Matthew iv. 4; Deuteronomy viii. 3

Leading scholars have argued that, especially in poor countries, the survival of new democracies requires elected governments to deliver to citizens the benefits of socioeconomic development (Przeworski, 1991; Elster, 1993; Dalton, 1994; Anderson, 1995, Diamond, 1995). Theorists also often assume that because the satisfaction of material needs is fundamental to human survival, people prefer to attain economic security before “higher order,” “post-material,” or “self-realization” goals (Maslow, 1970; Inglehart, 1997 and 2003). Stated simply, ordinary citizens in developing countries are held to look to democracy primarily to fulfill their longings for improved standards of living and competent national economic management. Indeed, democracy may be more effective than autocracy at reaching such developmental goals. According to recent research, democratic regimes are more adept than authoritarian systems at moderating population growth, raising per capita income, and reducing social inequalities (Przeworski et al., 2000; Halperin et al., 2004).

The empirical literature on mass opinion in new democracies, however, is converging on an unexpected conclusion. In explaining how ordinary people form their attitudes towards democracy, numerous scholars have discovered that politics matter more than economics (Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Gibson, 1996; Whitefield and Evans, 1999; Hofferbert and Klingemann, 1999; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer, 1999; Shin, 1999; Bratton, Mattes and Boadi, 2005). It would appear that, even if elected governments perform poorly on the economic front, they are able to legitimize democracy by providing certain long-denied political goods. These include political order, civil rights, and good governance. Linz and Stepan note “a surprisingly high degree of political support for the new political regime...despite economic hardship” (1996: 445). In Evans and Whitefield’s words, “citizens’ commitments to democracy may be less a function of how the market is perceived to work than of how democracy is itself experienced” (1995: 485).



This article seeks to explore, extend, and arbitrate this debate. We want to know whether, over the medium to long run, political goods continue to have positive effects on attitudes to democracy. By introducing the factor of time, we wish to subject competing arguments – How is democracy consolidated in the popular imagination? Is it via the delivery of economic or political goods? – to more rigorous tests than snapshots of public attitudes shortly after regime transitions have so far allowed. Specifically, *how long* does any political honeymoon last? How *durable* are newfound satisfactions with open politics? Specifically, *which* political and economic goods matter most?

To be sure, citizens who are flushed with the thrill of regime change may be content for a while to celebrate the political opportunities that accompany democratization. But, over time, should we not expect their political enthusiasms to be displaced by more basic human needs? It seems almost inevitable that, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the world's poorest region, popular concerns with material welfare would soon reclaim center stage. One would therefore expect political goods to have transitory effects; far from being durable, they would have a limited shelf life. Instead, it seems reasonable to propose that, as new democracies mature, the public mood will be driven increasingly by popular calls for the delivery of economic goods.

To test these ideas, we take advantage of a time series of public opinion data for Nigeria derived from the Afrobarometer, a comparative mass attitude survey conducted in 16 reforming regimes in the sub-Saharan region (Afrobarometer Network, 2004). With the introduction of the element of time – namely three observations of the public mood in Nigeria between January 2000 and September 2003 – it becomes possible to describe emerging trends in mass attitudes. Importantly, the data allow a comparison of the relative efficacy of political and economic delivery as time elapses after a democratic transition. We are especially interested to know whether the salience of political goods in explaining regime support and satisfaction fades or endures with the passage of time.

To anticipate, we report positive results about the durability of political goods in shaping mass attitudes to democracy, but with important qualifications. First, in generating demand for democracy as a preferred system of government, political considerations remain *paramount* even half a

decade after a change of regimes. Second, when citizens assess the amount of democracy actually supplied, they refer to the delivery of *both* political *and* economic goods. Third, the composition of the most important goods in political and economic baskets *changes over time*: economically, citizens increasingly base their views about democracy on the government's policy performance; politically, they judge democracy according to the trustworthiness of top leaders. Finally, even while *economic goods gradually become more central* to citizen appraisals of the extent of democracy, *the single most important consideration remains trustworthy leadership, a political good*.

In sum, while public opinion about democracy depends on the delivery of both types of goods, political goods are a much more influential and enduring source of democratic legitimacy than analysts previously had reason to suspect. Note that this claim is made for Nigeria, a country whose experience with democratic politics has intermittent at best and whose underperforming oil-based economy has been marred by gross mismanagement. Moreover, the survey data we report reveal a disillusioned populace whose political dreams and economic aspirations have been sorely tested. If the delivery of political goods can help sustain faith in democracy under these extremely unfavorable conditions, then this same political mechanism is likely to have similar effects elsewhere.

### **A Public Goods Approach to Regime Consolidation.**

At issue is whether the electoral regimes born in the post-Cold War world can do more than merely survive. Can they put down deep institutional roots? The risk is that current democratic experiments will give way to the restoration of former autocratic regimes or the consolidation of new, hybrid political systems (Carothers, 2002; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; Zakaria 2003). Accordingly, the objects of explanation in this paper are *demand for*, and *the supply of*, *democracy*. Stated differently, we seek to explain the legitimacy of democracy (how committed are citizens to this political regime?) and the institutionalization of democracy (how satisfied are people with the extent of democracy available in their country?).

It seems reasonable to suppose that the prospects of consolidation for any regime depend on performance considerations, that is, on the relative effectiveness of political authorities at satisfying the felt needs of citizens. Will emergent democracies enjoy more success at building popular support by guaranteeing public welfare than the range of failed authoritarian alternatives that came before, but whose restoration is merely a coup away? Are elected leaders more effective than fallen or would-be dictators at directing the machinery of state toward the reliable delivery of public goods? Our approach is to assume that the delivery of public goods, as viewed through mass opinion, opens a revealing window on the prospects for the consolidation of any political regime.

One defining purpose of the modern state is to provide citizens with public goods. Left to their own devices, individual citizens or profit-seeking firms will satisfy mainly private needs and will fail to deliver, or will under-provide, goods that are readily consumable by everyone. A standard distinction between divisible private goods and collective public goods lies at the heart of the logic of state formation and the rationale for state interventions into economy and society. While a market economy is the most effective device yet discovered for the accumulation of private goods, the state is a *sine qua non* for the delivery of goods whose benefits accrue to the public at large.

Moving beyond this familiar distinction between public and private goods, the present paper explores an important contrast *within* the universe of public goods. Linz and Stepan draw a useful line between “a basket of *economic goods* (which may be deteriorating) and a basket of *political goods* (which may be improving)” (1996: 442).

Because economic goods are concrete, they are easy to describe: they are the material products of the work done by individuals, households, and firms. These commodities are either consumed to sate today’s appetites or saved for possible future investment. State officials regularly serve as the intermediaries who make such allocation decisions. Citizens judge the delivery of economic goods not only with reference to personal living standards but also in relation to the performance of the larger national economy. As is well known, citizens often sacrifice personal “pocketbook” concerns in favor of “sociotropic” assessments of the health of the macro-economy when judging the economic performance

of political leaders, governments and regimes (Kinder and Kiewet, 1981). Most likely, they arrive at these big-picture assessments by interrogating the performance of governments at specific economic policies. For example, in countries that are undergoing economic liberalization as well as democratization, citizens may well assess the delivery of economic goods by asking whether structural adjustment reforms have resulted in perceptible benefits.

The neologism of political goods requires somewhat more clarification. In a seminal contribution, Pennock argues that political systems develop to the extent they perform “vital functions” such as “the attainment of...collective goals” (1966: 415, 420). By way of definition, “the focus of attention is upon those goals that satisfy...human needs, whose fulfillment makes the polity valuable to man (sic), and gives it its justification. I shall call these goals ‘political goods.’” (ibid., 420). He contends that the provision of political goods is a valuable metric for comparisons across countries and over time: “when we seek to compare a political system with another...or with its own past, its output of political goods should constitute one important element in our evaluation” (ibid., 421).

Adding specificity, Rotberg has recently built Pennock’s illustrative list of core political goods – “security, justice, liberty and welfare” (1966, 434) – into a “hierarchy of political goods.” At the pinnacle of this hierarchy, “none is as critical as the supply of security, especially human security” (2004: 3). Since individuals or groups cannot easily make private arrangements for political order, the state must assume prime responsibility for repelling external invasions, eliminating domestic uprisings, and controlling crime. Political order takes precedence among political goods because “other desirable political goods become possible (only) when a reasonable measure of security has been sustained” (ibid.). These subsidiary products include a rule of law (to punish wrongdoers, adjudicate disputes, and guarantee property and contracts) and a body of fundamental civil and political rights. Such essential freedoms include the liberties to think as one pleases, express views openly, assemble without let or hindrance, join associations, run for elective office, and pick candidates of one’s choice in elections. To the extent that citizens attach value to order, legality and rights – and thereby derive a feeling of self worth and human

dignity – these political consumables are “goods” in both the empirical and the normative senses of this word.

Public goods – whether political or economic – constitute the conceptual building blocks of an instrumental theory of regime consolidation. They are relevant to the task of theory building insofar as political authorities use the machinery of state to intervene in the production or distribution of all kinds of collective benefits. Where citizens enjoy the outputs of a growing economy or an atmosphere of greater freedom, they are likely to lend their support to the prevailing political regime. Where they experience impoverishment or repression – whether absolute, relative, or even imagined – citizens are likely to judge that the regime is failing to live up to its promises and that alternative political arrangements should be tried. Hence, it makes sense to trace the relative impacts of political and economic delivery on the progress of democracy as perceived by citizens themselves.

To conclude this section, we specify how the key concepts in this study are made operational for purpose of analysis. Under democracy, ordinary people are the ultimate arbiters of whether the political regime is legitimate and institutionalized and of the extent to which various goods are being delivered. Measurements of these aspects of public opinion are available from Afrobarometer surveys in Nigeria in January 2000, August 2001, and September 2003. Questionnaires, data sets, and codebooks can be viewed at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org). Appendices A and B to this article describe the composition and present summary statistics for all variables (means, standard deviations, factor statistics, and reliability scores), including all two-item constructs and multi-item indices. Appendix C summarizes the survey sampling protocol.

*Economic goods.* We measure economic goods along four dimensions as an individual’s: (a) subjective perceptions of personal living standards (b) evaluations of the prosperity of the national economy (c) judgments about the equity effects of the country’s economic reform program, and (d) appraisals of the government’s performance at implementing selected economic policies.

*Political goods.* Again, four dimensions are probed: (a) political order, as measured by the personal security felt by citizens (b) political rights, based *inter alia* on perceptions of freedom of

speech, association, and voting (c) popular views about the extent of official corruption, and (d) estimates of the trustworthiness of key institutions, in particular the presidency.

*Attitudes to democracy.* The objects to be explained are popular assessments of the quality of prevailing democratic regimes. We ask about two dimensions: What do people want as a preferred political regime? And what do they think they are getting? On the demand side, popular *demand for democracy* is an average index of individuals' preferences for democracy combined with their rejection of various authoritarian alternatives. On the supply side, we refer to the perceived *supply of democracy*, which is an average construct of people's satisfaction with the way democracy works in practice and their assessments of the extent to which democracy is actually being built in their country.

### **Why Nigeria?**

For a number of reasons, Nigeria is well suited to a study of the connections between the performance of elected governments and the quality of new democracies in poor countries. Nigeria is the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa and the second largest economy in the region after South Africa. The country is also a regional anchor that overshadows its neighbors in economic, military and political strength; its wellbeing substantially affects the developmental prospects of neighboring states in West Africa. Apart from its size and intrinsic importance, Nigeria embodies an array of problems that are common to many low-income democracies, as well as other African states. Despite a rich endowment of natural resources, notably oil, Nigeria is a poor country, with a GDP per capita of \$300 in 2003, down from \$900 in 1980. The country has also reflected inveterate problems of governance, including chronic political instability, weak institutional performance, and endemic corruption.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has undergone repeated cycles of democratic and authoritarian rule. The military has governed Nigeria for a total of twenty-nine years in the post-colonial era. Two civilian governments – the First Republic (1960-66) and the Second Republic (1979-83) – descended into corruption and conflict, and were terminated by the intervention of the armed forces. An abortive Third Republic collapsed in 1993 when General Ibrahim Babangida annulled transitional

elections for a civilian president. This instigated a political crisis culminating in the palace coup of General Sani Abacha, whose rule marked a nadir of government repression, political assassinations, massive corruption, economic decline, and the erosion of critical public institutions. Abacha's sudden death in 1998 opened the door to a transition to an elected civilian government. Following elections and the military's release of a new constitution, the Fourth Republic was inaugurated in May 1999 with President Olusegun Obasanjo elected to head the new government.

The Nigerian people greeted this most recent regime change with an enthusiasm often shading into euphoria. There was much expression of hope for a "democracy dividend" that would bring economic revitalization, a restoration of political rights and liberties, voice for average citizens, inclusion for marginalized groups, the attenuation of official wrongdoing, and the establishment of more effective and accountable government. During their early weeks in office, the new government outlined an ambitious agenda of reforms to address many of these concerns.

Over time, however, widespread disillusionment has set in. Few of the admittedly high expectations surrounding the transition have been realized, and many Nigerians now feel that a democracy dividend has eluded them. In the domain of politics, citizens are dismayed by a perception that political elites are aloof and self-interested. The constitution, drafted during the military era, has opened the way to contention over the separation of powers, the extent of fundamental rights, and the distributive tensions that suffuse Nigerian society. Patronage politics and communal rivalries have shaped the political process, aggravating competition over power and spoils. Acrimonious relations between the president and the legislature have created deadlock over key policies and laws. In consequence, central reforms have languished and pervasive concerns such as corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency continue to fester. Moreover, the new government made little headway in reversing the institutional degeneration inherited from previous regimes.

Many of these political liabilities are evident in the economic realm. Nigeria's over-centralized, oil-based economy has suffered for decades from mismanagement and unfavorable policies, resulting in slow growth and rising poverty. Political struggles over the allocation of oil revenues and

other distributive issues have aggravated the nation's many cultural divisions. After a decade of plunder and international isolation under the military, Obasanjo promised new principles of transparency, more effective economic policies, and greater benefits from the international economy, including investment and debt relief. There was slow movement on these issues, however, as the government failed to launch a consistent economic program during the first four years of Obasanjo's administration. Joblessness, decaying infrastructure, and chronic corruption aggravated public frustration.

Another critical problem is the rising tide of social tension and communal violence. Since the transition to civilian rule, more than sixty incidents of violence have claimed at least 12,000 lives across the country. These conflicts do not have a single motive or trigger. They include large-scale riots with a religious or ethnic dimension, local disputes over land or boundaries, violence directed at government or foreign corporations, state-instigated crackdowns on restive communities, clashes among vigilante groups, and conflict among political factions. Two major sources of instability are the growing dissension among minorities in the Niger Delta, and the religious tensions spurred by the introduction of *Shari'a* law in twelve northern states. The turbulent 2002-03 electoral season also gave rise to partisan militias and several high-profile assassinations. This pervasive insecurity has unsettled many Nigerians and increased criticisms of government failures to contain conflict.

The second democratic elections of April-May 2003 marked both achievements and difficulties for the new regime. The elections were held in a relatively peaceful atmosphere, with less violence and political turmoil than was evident in previous civilian-administered contests. The losing parties, though deeply aggrieved, pursued their complaints through the judicial system. This permitted a smooth transition to a second civilian term of office, a watershed in Nigeria's political history. At the same time, the elections revealed a tumultuous party system, dysfunctional electoral machinery, pervasive misconduct among political elites, and widespread mistrust of the process.

This brief sketch of regime change and government performance in Nigeria serves to highlight many shortcomings in the delivery of public goods, in both the political and material realms. As we document below, Nigerians express rapidly declining levels of confidence in the new democratic

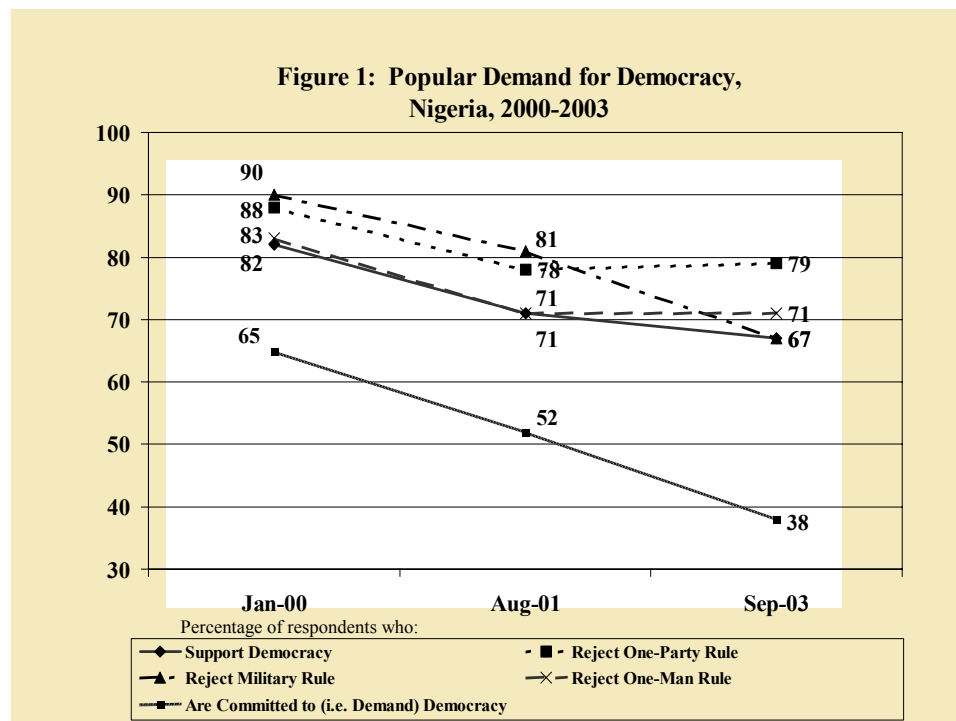


dispensation, as measured by sequential Afrobarometer surveys. In short, there is considerable temporal variation to explain in mass attitudes to democracy.

### Trends in Attitudes to Democracy

#### Popular Demand for Democracy. What kind of political regime do Nigerians want?

The results are displayed in Figure 1. Our principal indicator of the demand for democracy is the degree to which Nigerians prefer a democratic regime above all other alternatives. Popular support for democracy in Nigeria has dropped from 82 percent in 2000 to 67 percent in 2003. Nevertheless, two-thirds of Nigerians say they prefer democracy, a proportion similar to the current Afrobarometer average for 16 countries (64 percent). So, while support for democracy has certainly declined over time, it remains the preference of a clear majority. Thus, while slackening, democratic sentiment is resilient. This pattern confirms a longstanding intuition about Nigerian politics: in spite of the historical shortcomings of the country's democratic experiments, there is an abiding attachment to democratic ideals among ordinary Nigerians.



This general preference for democracy is reinforced by citizens' attitudes toward specific non-democratic alternatives. Nigerians are fairly consistent in their rejection of one-party rule, which has stabilized at 79 percent (after dropping from 88 percent in 2000). In this respect, Nigerians differ from many other Africans – especially Ugandans, Namibians, and Mozambicans – who show greater tolerance for a dominant party. Nigerians also continue to resist the idea of personal dictatorship, with seven in ten rejecting the idea of a presidential “strongman” (down from 83 percent in 2000). With regard to military intervention and rule, however, there is greater ambivalence. In 2000, Nigerians professed an overwhelming rejection of government by the armed forces, as nine in ten disapproved this option. In the most recent survey, two-thirds disavowed military rule, the steepest drop (23 percentage points) for any of the authoritarian options we queried.

These responses reflect Nigeria's post-colonial political experience. The country has no history of single-party rule because deep ethno-regional divisions serve as a check on the emergence of a party monopoly. Instead, Nigerians tend to associate one-party rule with neighboring states such as Cameroon, Niger, or Ivory Coast, none of which present an appealing model. The public is more ambivalent about the prospects of an autocratic president. The country's experience with personal despotism in the 1990s has certainly dampened popular acceptance of a domineering executive. At the same time, many Nigerians are nostalgic for the energetic reform initiatives of General Murtala Muhammed in the mid-1970s or the “corrective” leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari a decade later. The dashed hopes and frustrations of Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency have certainly inclined some citizens to wish for a more assertive and effective president, even if such leadership curbs pluralism or democratic rights. Criticisms of Obasanjo's weak leadership as a civilian president are ironic when juxtaposed to the strong course he steered as a military ruler from 1976-79, including the first organized transition from military rule to a democratic regime.

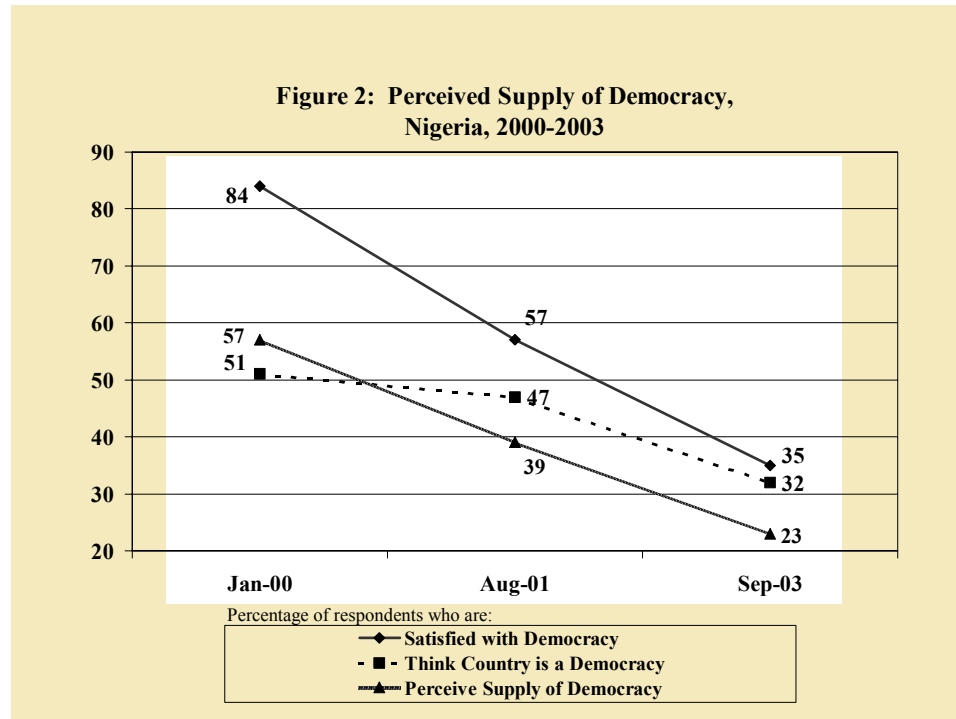
The collective memories of military rule are even more ambiguous. While recent military regimes have been notable for their repressiveness and corruption, many Nigerians nonetheless hold positive recollections of the nationalist and populist regimes during the oil boom years. Further, the

country's long experience with military intervention has created a public mindset amenable to the arrival of a "man on horseback" in times of crisis or political failure. This is the most likely explanation for the relative tractability of popular responses to army rule. Authoritarian nostalgia and trust in the armed forces, however, are not evenly distributed across the population. Northern Nigerians (where most of the country's military rulers have originated) show relatively greater confidence in the military institution. Moreover, Igbos and other residents of eastern Nigeria appear more amenable than average Nigerians to a return of the military to power, reflecting the growing disaffection of a minority group that feels marginal under democratic rule.

Taken singly, alternatives to democracy are roundly opposed; at least two-thirds of Nigerians reject each particular option. However, the proportion of citizens who simultaneously reject *all* non-democratic alternatives has diminished substantially. We observe the largest shift in regime preferences when we combine attitudes into a compound measure of demand for democracy. An individual's demand for democracy reflects her depth of commitment to democracy above other forms of government. It is measured by the extent to which she simultaneously *both* supports democracy *and* rejects *all three* authoritarian alternatives (one-party, one-man, and military rule). This indicator slumped in Nigeria from 65 percent in early 2000 to 38 percent in late 2003. Its straight downward trajectory (Figure 1) signals the emergence of a mass crisis of confidence about the suitability of democracy to Nigeria's circumstances.

**The Perceived Supply of Democracy.** According to ordinary Nigerians, what kind of regime do political elites supply? This is measured by assessments of the institutionalization of democracy, the results of which are shown in Figure 2. In contrast to the demand side, where democratic preferences have subsided moderately, on the supply side, satisfaction with democracy has virtually collapsed. Asked about satisfaction with the way democracy actually works in their country, fewer than half as many Nigerians feel positive in late 2003 as did so in early 2000. Over this four-year interval, the proportion feeling either "fairly satisfied" or "very satisfied" tumbled from 84 percent to 35 percent, a free-fall of almost 50 percentage points. Nigerians also became more cautious in judging the extent of

democracy attained in their country. Whereas in 2000, about one half saw Nigeria as either a “full (i.e. consolidated) democracy” or “a democracy with (only) minor problems,” merely a third proffered the same opinion in 2003. Most of those who saw any democracy at all ventured the realistic opinion that Nigeria was “a democracy with major problems” (52 percent).

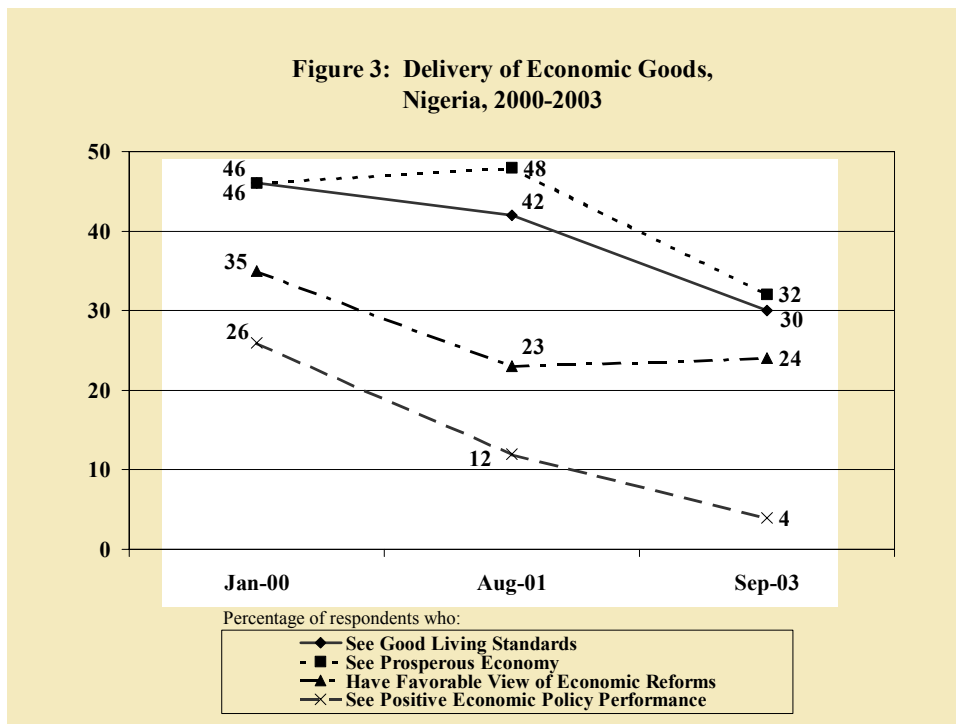


To arrive at a composite measure of the perceived supply of democracy, we combine *satisfaction* with democracy and assessments of the *extent* of democracy on a common four-point scale. By 2003, only half as many Nigerians were *both* satisfied *and* saw progress in the construction of democracy as four years earlier (23 percent versus 56 percent). In short, Nigerians tend strongly toward the view that their democracy is unraveling rather than moving toward consolidation. All of these indicators suggest a profound disillusionment among the Nigerian public. Popular expectations, which in retrospect were wildly over-optimistic at the moment of transition, have been frustrated with the passage of time. Nigerians have a pronounced tendency to see their new democratic regime headed in the wrong direction. In short, citizens perceive a deficient supply of democratic institutions from their leaders.

Having described the object of inquiry – trends in popular attitudes to democracy – we now provide a profile of competing explanatory factors.

### Trends in the Delivery of Public Goods

**The Delivery of Economic Goods.** Popular perceptions of government performance also follow downward trends, seen in the first instance with respect to the delivery of economic goods. This is illustrated in Figure 3. Nigerians perceive falling living standards over time. Our indicator is a scale of personal life conditions calculated as an average of present, past and future assessments, in addition to a judgment of one’s relative economic standing in relation to other Nigerians. Whereas 46 percent felt that their own living standards were “fairly good” or “very good” on this scale in early 2000, just 30 percent felt the same way by late 2003.



These responses correspond to the observable realities of the Nigerian economy in recent years. Despite buoyant oil prices, economic growth has remained below 4 percent and indicators of

poverty remain high. Owing to Nigeria's large rapid population growth rate, any windfall in the petroleum sector yields meager gains on a per capita basis. Weak performance in employment-generating areas of the economy means that Nigerians have seen scant economic opportunities, while inflation has further eroded low incomes. The scope and quality of government services has fallen well short of popular needs, especially in the crucial areas of health and education. Citizens' perceptions of their own economic circumstances mirror the adverse picture seen in objective indicators of economic welfare (World Bank 2004).

Nigerians have arrived at a similarly negative assessment of national economic conditions, but were slower to do so. We measured popular views of the performance of the macro-economy with a single item that asked about "the country's present economic condition." In the first two years following the political transition, public opinion on this subject remained fairly positive: between 46 and 48 percent saw a prosperous economy. But the public mood turned sour thereafter, declining to 32 percent positive by September 2003.

This downturn in public evaluations should be viewed in the context of expectations surrounding the democratic transition. After several years of predatory dictatorship under military rulers, many Nigerians anticipated an economic "democracy dividend" in the form of debt relief from international donors and increasing flows of foreign investment. Further, the new government pledged ambitious economic reforms, and rising global oil prices promised an increase in revenues. Under these circumstances, perceptions trailed reality, and Nigerians remained upbeat on the state of the national economy until evidence of continued malaise prompted more sober assessments. The public reacted slowly to cumulative signs of failure, which included political gridlock over the annual budget, the absence of progress on debt alleviation, the persistence of widespread corruption, and a continuing litany of discouraging economic indicators. Declining assessments of personal economic conditions also probably pulled down appraisals of the national economy.

The government's performance at implementing policies for economic stability and growth garners an especially telling popular indictment. We measure policy performance on a scale

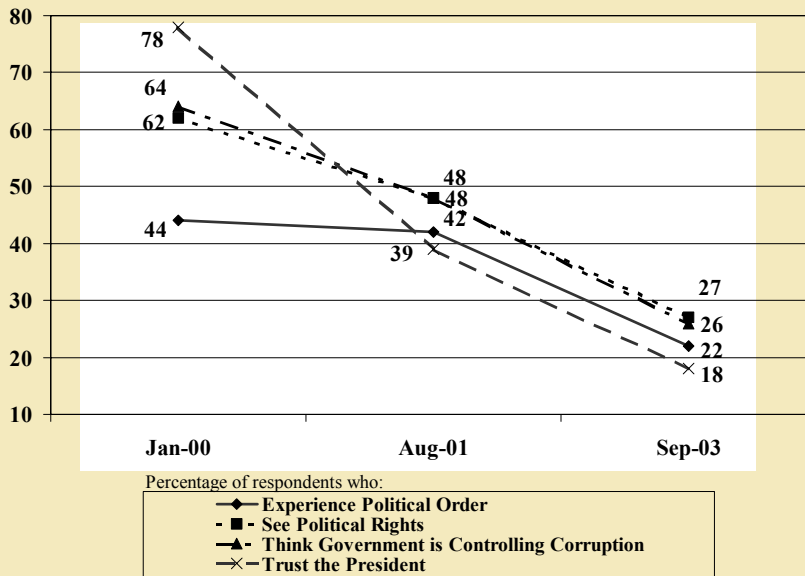
derived from four key economic policies: job creation, inflation control, income equality, and food security. At best, only one-quarter of the populace ever thought that the government was performing well at implementing this package of policies (26 percent in January 2000). By late 2003, however, only one out of 25 citizens (4 percent) of citizens was willing to say that the government was doing “fairly well” or “very well” at handling all these central tasks of national economic management.

Efforts to reform the economy have also earned diminishing public confidence. Nigeria has long been engaged in various programs of orthodox economic reform through a series of structural adjustment policies intermittently supported by the multilateral financial institutions. The evident lack of enthusiasm for neo-liberal reforms among Nigerians is reflected in data from the Afrobarometer. In the first survey of January 2000, only a third of the population (35 percent) affirmed that the government’s economic policies had “helped most people.” More recently, this indicator has stabilized at lower levels. Just one-quarter (23 or 24 percent) of citizens now offer a favorable assessment of government policies. Thus, by 2003, a clear majority (73 percent) thought that, “most people have suffered” from measures to introduce a market-oriented economy.

The declining acceptance of economic liberalization reflects popular skepticism toward the government’s claims for the benefits of reform. Set against the country’s seemingly intractable economic malaise, the promise of neo-liberal reform rings increasingly hollow to many citizens. Further, liberalization policies have brought tangible hardships in the form of price increases (especially for fuel), and anxiety about job security in major public and private enterprises. As reform measures have taken hold, popular support has correspondingly waned.

**The Delivery of Political Goods.** In this section, we record trends in the delivery of political goods, starting with political order and then progressing through political rights, corruption-free government, and trustworthy leaders (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Delivery of Political Goods,  
Nigeria, 2000-2003**



As noted previously, personal security is among the most fundamental goods sought by citizens from their government. An individual's sense of security can be undermined by exposure to, or fear of, violence. Pennock defines security as that which "a man (sic) enjoys in walking the streets at night, the assurance that he has of the safety of his house and property...these are matters that are or should be within the state's control" (1966: 422). Thus our indicator is an average construct of a respondent's feelings of safety from crime and violence since the change of political regime, and assessments of the government's performance at controlling crime. While this indicator of political order stayed steady for a couple of years following transition (at over 40 percent positive), it dropped off later (to just 22 percent positive). As much as from their personal experience with criminal activity, Nigerians are reacting to evidence in the media and from their fellow citizens that armed robbery, political and civil violence remain frequent, and possibly worsening, problems.

As for political rights, Nigerians have not sustained their early expectations that democratization would deliver a liberating sense of freedom. Immediately after the return to civilian rule,



clear majorities thought that they had obtained the right to speak, associate, and vote. They also realized that they could now influence government and hoped to receive equal treatment in return. At that heady moment of change, an average of 62 percent considered that they were freer in these important respects under democratic rule than under military regimes. Since that time a secular decline has set in, which has undermined the popular sense that rights have been achieved, to 48 percent in mid 2001 and later to just 27 percent in late 2003. While the federal government has not acted aggressively to violate basic rights and liberties, many Nigerians perceive these freedoms to be eroding at local levels through the unconstrained actions of political barons, vigilantes, and rival ethnic or religious communities. Further, several high-profile atrocities by government security forces in restive communities – notably the Odi massacre of late 1999 and similar attacks on villages in Benue State two years later – have contributed to perceptions that essential rights have been curtailed since the initial opening under civilian leaders.

A highly valued political good for ordinary Africans – and most certainly for Nigerians – is clean, transparent government, free of corruption. When the Obasanjo administration first came in, Nigerians expressed high hopes that it would follow through on promises to launch a vigorous cleanup campaign. Early in his first term, the new President proposed a far-reaching anti-corruption law and established a commission to investigate and pursue official graft. Nonetheless, the proportion of all adults who give the government positive grades for fighting official corruption has dropped from two-thirds (64 percent) to one-quarter (26 percent) in less than four years. The government's failure to effectively implement anti-corruption legislation, along with the relatively weak performance of the country's anti-corruption commission, surely contributes to public disaffection. In addition, a succession of public scandals over misconduct in the National Assembly, and evidence of opaque government spending – including exorbitant outlays for a soccer stadium in the national capital – have reinforced perceptions of high-level malfeasance.

Africa's politics are characteristically personalized and centralized, and citizens therefore place exceptionally high value on their feelings about leaders, especially the head of state. Nigerians have evinced volatile reactions to President Olusegun Obasanjo. Expressions of relative trust in Obasanjo as

president have declined remarkably, from 78 percent positive in January 2000 to a meager 18 percent positive in September 2003. Obasanjo had a long personal history of campaigning for democratization and transparency since resigning his commission in 1979. The reforms profiled in the first six months of the new administration encouraged much of the public that regime change would deliver improvements in governance. Regrettably, many of these initial promises were not fulfilled, and the president's often brusque and high-handed style has clearly alienated many citizens. Further, the contentious 2003 elections, which were riddled with flaws, tarnished the legitimacy of Obasanjo's presidency in such areas as the northern states, the Igbo-speaking areas, and the oil-producing Niger Delta.

### **Testing Alternative Explanations**

We are now ready to probe for causes. Do mass attitudes to democracy derive from popular perceptions about how well or badly the government has delivered various public goods?

At face value, the consistent downward trends in *all* opinions would suggest a set of systematic interconnections. Since Nigerians report that, in their view, every aspect of government performance is in decline, one would expect that, together, these evaluations would plausibly account for collapse of popular excitement about democracy in Nigeria. Elated as they were in 2000, Nigerians were soon disappointed enough in the performance of their newly elected government that they began to disparage their country's momentous transition from military rule.

Beyond this general link, one would expect the largest shifts in performance evaluations to be the most formative in shaping emerging attitudes toward democracy. The biggest declines in mass perceptions about the delivery of public goods concern policy performance (an economic good) and trustworthiness of leaders (a political good). Over a period of four years, positive views of the Obasanjo government's policy performance crumpled by 85 percent (from 26 to 4 percent of all respondents). At the same time, popular trust in leaders, specifically in President Obasanjo himself, deflated by 77 percent (from 78 to 18 percent). Such extreme attrition suggests that failure to deliver these particular goods

(sound economic policies, trustworthy top leaders) will lead the way in explaining a general recession in democratic sentiments.

But the question remains: over time, which are more important to the quality of democracy: economic or political goods? Which category of deliverables makes the most durable contribution to democracy's survival? And, specifically, which particular political and economic goods matter most?

To address these questions, we ran a series of statistical tests on two dependent variables: popular *demand for democracy* and the perceived *supply of democracy*, whose measurement has been documented above and in the Appendices. The predictor variables were the familiar clusters of public goods. Representing *economic goods* we included opinions about living standards, the prosperity of the economy, the impact of economic reforms, and the performance of the government at various economic polices. To repeat, we rendered *political goods* as perceptions of law and order, plus the perceived availability of political and civil rights, an honest government free of corruption, and trustworthy leadership.

**Explaining Demand for Democracy.** Table 1 presents results for *demand for democracy* based initially on analysis of data pooled across all three surveys (n = 8066). In a simple correlation analysis, the expectation is borne out that all types of public goods are significantly, and sometimes strongly, related to demand for democracy. But two political goods – political rights and trustworthy leaders – are more strongly correlated than any economic good. Moreover, the connection is negative to a prosperous economy and economic reform, which implies that demand for democracy can easily coexist with the imperfect delivery of certain economic goods.

**Table 1: POPULAR DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY, Explanatory Factors Compared**

Pooled Data						R 1	R 1.5	R 2
n = 8066						Jan-00 n = 3508	Aug-01 n = 2175	Sep-03 n = 2383
	R	B	Sig. B	S.E.	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
					Rank			
Constant		1.848		0.035				
<b>ECONOMIC GOODS</b>								
Improved Living Standards	0.056	0.021	0.016	0.009	0.031	0.055	0.006	0.002
Prosperous Economy	-0.057	-0.044	0.000	0.005	-0.115	-0.128	-0.042	-0.050
Economic Reforms	-0.106	-0.040	0.000	0.004	-0.112	-0.103	-0.170	-0.096
Policy Performance	0.026	-0.040	0.000	0.007	-0.084	-0.105	-0.110	-0.203
<b>POLITICAL GOODS</b>								
Political Order	0.104	0.014	0.051	0.007	0.027	0.087	0.040	-0.025
Political Rights	0.249	0.160	0.000	0.009	0.229	0.174	0.301	0.145
Honest Government	0.087	0.019	0.000	0.005	0.052	0.043	0.013	0.026
Trustworthy Leaders	0.138	0.051	0.000	0.006	0.098	-0.042	0.070	0.085
R		0.309				0.267	0.371	0.247
R square		0.096				0.072	0.138	0.061
Adjusted R square		0.095				0.069	0.134	0.058
SE estimate				0.500				
Adj. R square (Econ goods only)		0.025				0.029	0.036	0.034
Adj. R square (Pol goods only)		0.064				0.034	0.093	0.017

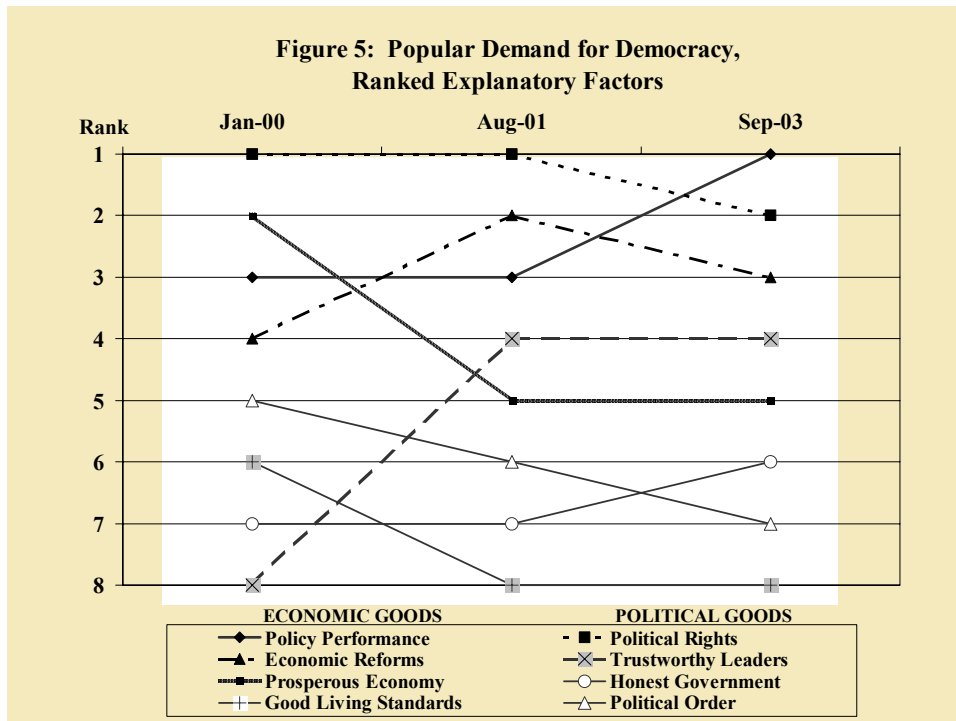
These findings are sustained and expanded in ordinary least squares regression analysis. Even when all predictors are mutually controlled, the delivery of political rights remains the dominant explanatory variable (Beta rank = 1). It is twice as influential in the formation of democratic preferences as the availability of a prosperous economy (Beta = .229 versus -.115). Moreover, economic goods – now including even policy performance – are again inversely related to demand for democracy, confirming that preferences for democracy in Nigeria are formed *in spite of* perceptions that the economy is in decline.

It must be conceded that an instrumental model of opinion formation, based on evaluations of government performance at delivering public goods, does not do a stellar job of explaining demand for democracy. With these pooled data, we can account for less than 10 percent of the variance in this key public attitude (adjusted R square = .095). A better explanation requires reference to a more fully specified model including a citizen's awareness of democracy, understanding of its content, and knowledge of public affairs (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi, 2005, 273). Because demand for democracy is based instead on cognitive learning, it is more susceptible to interpretations based on a citizen's intrinsic understandings than on his or her instrumental satisfactions.

Nevertheless, the main point of the present analysis still stands: an explanation based on the delivery of political goods does a better job than an economically driven approach in explaining why Nigerians generally prefer democracy to dictatorship. Indeed, a regression model using political goods alone is more than twice as powerful as one based on economic goods alone (compare bloc adjusted R squares: .064 versus .025).

This important finding must be qualified, however, with reference to the evolution of public opinion over time. A time dimension is introduced by disaggregating the pooled data according to the three rounds of Afrobarometer surveys (labeled R1, R1.5, R2 to account for the fact that the second Nigeria survey took place between the cross-national Afrobarometer Rounds 1 and 2). Table 1 provides hints that political goods provision may become less effective over time in generating demand for democracy. While political rights drive the explanation of demand for democracy in 2000 and 2001,

these political goods are a less important factor than policy performance (an economic good) in 2003 (.145 versus -.203). As Figure 5 shows, policy performance displaces political rights as the leading explanatory factor over time. And overall, a model based on all four economic goods does twice as well at explaining demand for democracy in 2003 as a model based on all four political goods, though neither model does at all well (Table 1, last column: adjusted R square = .034 versus .017).



One possibility is that, over time, the delivery of political goods becomes less important than the provision of economic goods in shaping Africans' political regime preferences. As the memory of political transition begins to fade, people cease celebrating newfound freedoms and revert to more fundamental considerations of material survival. In short, the political honeymoon draws to a close and the stark realities of African poverty and deprivation come to the fore. In the hierarchy of basic needs, economic wellbeing reasserts itself over political freedom.

All this could be confirmed if the relationship between economic goods (including policy performance) and demand for democracy was positive. But it is not. In Round 2 Afrobarometer surveys (Table 1, last column), three economic goods are *negatively* juxtaposed to demand for democracy. In the case of policy performance, this negative relationship is very strong. In short, over time, Nigerians become *less* (not more) dependent on economic evaluations in determining whether they want democracy. Stated differently, the passage of time induces citizens to increasingly divorce their evaluations of the government's economic performance from the broader question of whether they prefer democracy to other political regimes. Indeed, the perception (correct or not) that the economy is on the skids constitutes a rigorous test of *how deeply* individuals are committed to democracy. A core of ordinary citizens in Nigeria (who both support democracy and reject all its authoritarian alternatives) has withstood this test by committing themselves to democracy *regardless* of what happens to the economy.

These dynamics are confirmed by the role of felt living standards in the formation of democratic preferences. We find that public opinion in Nigeria runs contrary to the conventional view that the survival of new democracies in poor countries depends on the government's ability to raise mass living standards. As Figure 5 shows, living standards are a poor predictor of demand for democracy from the very beginning (Beta rank = 6 in 2000). Moreover their explanatory prowess declines over time, soon settling at dead last (Beta rank = 8 in 2001 and 2003). By 2003, living standards are essentially a neutral factor in the determination of demand for democracy. Whether people think that their present living standards are good, bad or indifferent, they are equally likely to demand democracy. In short, we have found an analogue at the micro-level for Przeworski et al.'s macro-level claim that democracy can be installed in poor or rich countries (2000, 98). Our gloss on this finding is that democracy is a demand of both poor and rich *people*.

**Explaining the Supply of Democracy.** Table 2 presents results for the *supply of democracy*, based again on both pooled data and a time series of component surveys. An analysis of these data helps us understand the considerations that ordinary Nigerians use in assessing whether national political elites are institutionalizing democracy.

**Table 2: THE PERCEIVED SUPPLY OF DEMOCRACY, Explanatory Factors Compared**

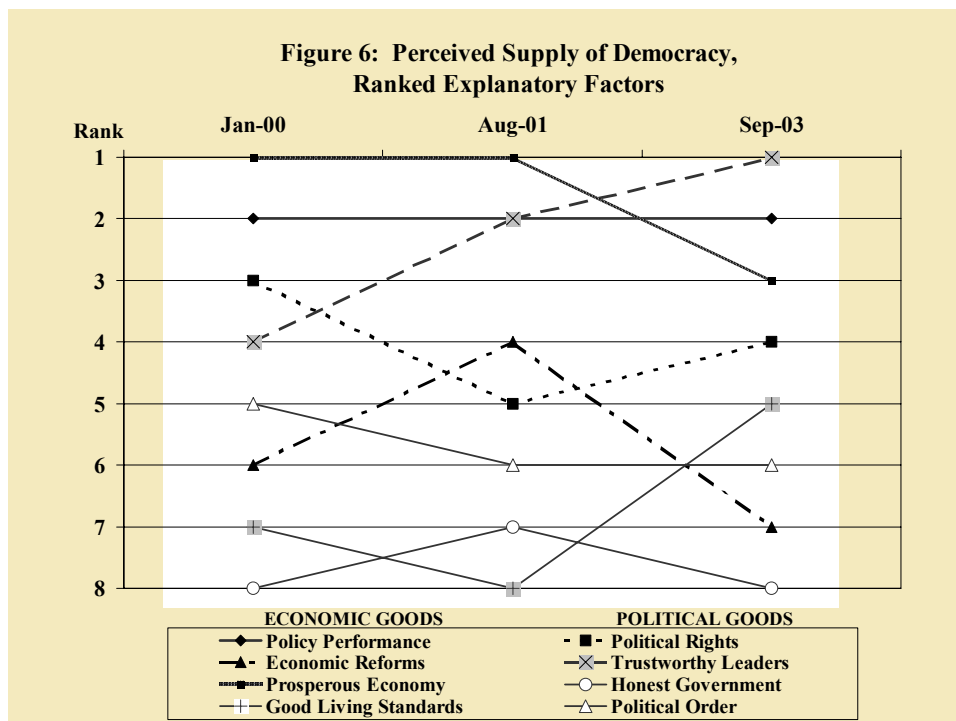
Pooled Data		R 1	R 1.5	R 2					
n = 7829		Jan-00 n = 3416	Aug-01 n = 2117	Sep-03 n = 2296					
	R	B	Sig. B	S.E.	Beta	Beta Rank	Beta	Beta	
Constant		0.753		0.040					
<b>ECONOMIC GOODS</b>									
Improved Living Standards	0.353	0.066	0.000	0.010	0.070	5	0.064	0.080	
Prosperous Economy	0.370	0.074	0.000	0.006	0.140	4	0.157	0.134	
Economic Reforms	0.181	0.034	0.000	0.005	0.069	6	0.072	0.047	
Policy Performance	0.482	0.126	0.000	0.008	0.190	2	0.156	0.217	
<b>POLITICAL GOODS</b>									
Political Order	0.382	0.038	0.000	0.008	0.054	7	0.078	0.068	
Political Rights	0.393	0.155	0.000	0.010	0.159	3	0.110	0.109	
Honest Government	0.371	0.024	0.000	0.006	0.047	8	0.035	0.011	
Trustworthy Leaders	0.457	0.153	0.000	0.007	0.214	1	0.084	0.220	
R		0.616					0.425	0.499	0.614
R square		0.379					0.181	0.249	0.377
Adjusted R square		0.379					0.179	0.246	0.375
SE estimate				0.571					
Adj. R square (Econ goods only)		0.292					0.153	0.209	0.308
Adj. R square (Pol goods only)		0.311					0.108	0.145	0.304



Apparently, in formulating views about the supply of democracy, the general public makes reference to the delivery of *both* political and economic goods. As Table 2 shows, the correlations between all types of goods and satisfaction with democracy's extent are consistently positive, statistically significant, and far stronger than in the previous model of demand for democracy. Taken together, these results suggest a powerful instrumental argument linking government performance at delivering public goods to popular perceptions of whether democracy is taking root.

This expectation, including all significant relationships, holds up in regression analysis. Table 2 summarizes a parsimonious model in which the delivery of just 8 public goods explains 38 percent of the variance in popular perceptions of the supply of democracy. Economic and political goods are both equally necessary in this model: the former explain some 29 percent of variance; and the latter some 31 percent. But neither category of goods alone constitutes a sufficient explanation; each does a better job at prompting mass perceptions of democracy's supply when provided in conjunction with the other.

With reference to political goods, the most important factor overall is trustworthy leaders, which we measure as trust in the national president (Beta rank = 1). Nigerians are three times as likely to derive their judgments about the institutionalization of democracy from their feelings of trust toward the national president (a political good, Beta = .214) as from their evaluations of living standards or economic reforms (both economic goods, Betas = .070 and .069). And, when all responses are pooled, the provision of political rights turns out a better predictor of democracy's supply than the boon of a booming economy. A good part of the reason is that a prosperous economy becomes less determinative over time; as Figure 6 shows, this predictor falls from first rank to third rank between 2001 and 2003 (Figure 6).



But one key economic good is consistently important to the perceived supply of democracy. Economic policy performance always ranks second in overall predictive power, both in the model based on pooled data (Table 2) and in each separate survey (Figure 6). In deciding whether their country is attaining democracy, Nigerians repeatedly make reference to the government’s management of policies for job creation, controlling inflation, and ensuring that everyone has enough to eat. They also compare economic conditions across society before deciding whether their elected government is ensuring a fair distribution of income. In short, they use the delivery of widespread material welfare as a benchmark for appraising the performance of democracy.

Surprisingly, political order is a less critical commodity than Rotberg’s hierarchy of political goods would lead one to expect. At least in Nigeria, ordinary people rank it fifth or sixth among all public goods and only third among the four political goods studied here. Moreover, its influence declines over time. To all appearances, the upsurge of communal (especially religious) violence that has occurred in Nigeria since 1999 has not prompted citizens to condemn the process of democratization.

Instead, when judging the supply of democracy, Nigerians are three times as likely to refer to the provision of political rights than to the establishment of political order (Beta = .159 versus .054). If this finding holds elsewhere, then we may be led to conclude that citizens in emergent democracies value freedom more highly than stability. But there is surely a limit to the extent to which new democrats can tolerate disorder. Moreover, the construction of democracy is inhibited where the basic foundations of a state, especially the rule of law, have not been laid down.

We are also surprised to learn that ordinary Nigerians do not draw a closer connection between the control of corruption and the construction of democracy. The political good of clean and honest government, while positive for perceptions of the supply of democracy, consistently ranks low among public goods (eighth out of 8 in 2000 and 2003). Along these lines, we would expect popular trust in leaders and mass estimates about the honesty of government to have similar effects on perceived democratic development. While both are positive, these two predictors diverge over time: trust in leaders becomes much more important, whereas views about clean government remain flat (Figure 6). This suggests that the question about “trust in the president” either captures a differentiated view of corruption (in which the national “big man” is seen as less corrupt than his cronies) or is tapping another concept (such as approval of the president’s overall job performance). In Nigeria, it is also possible that citizens are willing to tolerate a certain level of official corruption, especially if they personally benefit from the division of spoils.

The most striking finding about political goods is the increasing importance over time of trust in the president as an explanation of the supply of democracy. The variance in the dependent variable explained by this predictor almost triples between 2000 and 2003 (from Beta = .084 to .220) (Table 2, last column). Over the same period, trust in the president moves up from the fourth most influential good to the topmost rank (Figure 6). (As Figure 5 shows, it also jumps up four ranks – from last to fourth – on the demand side). By 2003, therefore, trust in the president was just as decisive in shaping perceptions of the supply of democracy in Nigeria as people’s assessments of how well the Obasanjo government was managing the economy (compare Beta = .220 with .217). Critically, the

political good of trustworthy leadership had *displaced* all other economic considerations, including the popular perceptions of the prosperity of the economy that had dominated judgments about democracy's supply immediately after the transition.

**The Passage of Time.** Implicit in the preceding analysis is the hypothesis that the effects of the delivery of public goods on democratic attitudes depend on the passage of time. This matter is central to the core research question posed in this article: how durable are political goods as determinants of mass attitudes to democracy?

We have already observed numerous differential effects of various public goods in each of three rounds of Afrobarometer surveys in Nigeria. So far, we have approached the time factor by splitting the pooled data into sub-samples for each survey and then comparing the signs, relative magnitudes, and ranks of standardized regression (Beta) coefficients. But this “eyeballing” technique – whether comparing coefficients across columns in Tables 1 and 2 or viewing trend lines in Figures 5 and 6 – is crude and partly subjective. “It cannot provide adequate information about how, and how certainly, different these coefficients are” (Franzese, Kam, and Jamal, 2001, 3). In order to make a statistical comparison, it is necessary to move beyond separate linear-additive equations and to reanalyze the pooled data using an interactive model (Jaccard et al. 1990). We focus on the relative size and statistical significance of the interaction terms themselves on the understanding that residual coefficients are not readily subject to interpretation (Braumoeller, 2005).

Most importantly, we seek to concentrate on large, meaningful relationships by using the perceived *supply of democracy* as a sole dependent variable. To simplify the model and to minimize the number of interaction effects, we initially compose single factors representing political and economic goods. As reported in Appendix B, the four individual political variables used in previous analyses can be summarized in terms of a single, reliable factor to which we can attach the encompassing label of “political goods.” Similarly, the four specific economic variables cohere into a distinctive and reliable factor that we call “economic goods.” In the equation that follows, the new variables with these labels are factor scores.

The other new elements in the equation are interaction terms, one each for the joint effects of time with political and economic goods respectively. Formally, the interaction model is:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3(X_1Z) + b_4(X_2Z) + b_5Z + e$$

where Y = perceived supply of democracy, X<sub>1</sub> = economic goods (factor score), X<sub>2</sub> = political goods (factor score), Z = time elapsed in months from Nigeria's political transition in May 1999 to the time of the Afrobarometer survey (R1 = 8, R1.5 = 27, R2 = 52), X<sub>1</sub>Z = an interaction term created by multiplying economic goods by time elapsed, and X<sub>2</sub>Z = an interaction term created by multiplying political goods by time elapsed.

The ordinary least squares regression estimates for the interactive model are given in Table 3 and can be interpreted as follows. First, an even more parsimonious model – now employing just 5 predictors – still explains 38 percent of the variance in supply of democracy. In other words, the transformation of individual variables into overarching categories of public goods and the introduction of the time factor does not lead to a loss of predictive power. On the contrary, this final model offers gains in explanatory efficiency.

**Table 3: Supply of Democracy, Interactive Model 1**

	B	S.E.	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	2.809	.013		221.814	.000
<b>Time Elapsed</b> (since transition, May 1999)	-.008	.000	-.213	-20.540	.000
Economic Goods (factor score)	.192	.016	.222	12.184	.000
<b>INTERACTION (Economic Goods x Time)</b>	.002	.000	<b>.078</b>	4.043	.000
Political Goods (factor score)	.183	.018	.215	10.159	.000
<b>INTERACTION (Political Goods x Time)</b>	.001	.001	<b>.056</b>	2.559	.011
R = .613					
R square = .376					
Adjusted R square = .375					

Second, we draw attention to the negative sign and strong regression coefficient on time elapsed (Beta = -.213). As expected, popular assessments of democratic supply decline as the months and years pass following a landmark political transition. So, even if citizens do not perceive the delivery of public goods to have declined, the mere passage of time alone would erode initial post-transition enthusiasms. This finding can be interpreted as a control on the initial extent to which Nigerians harbored unrealistic expectations about the performance of their new democracy. The remaining coefficients symbolize the effects of public goods delivery as if the effects of mass euphoria could be suppressed.

Third, we observe for the first time in Nigeria that, when the effects of time are discounted (time = 0), the delivery of economic goods appears to have slightly stronger effects than political goods on the perceived supply of democracy. For every whole unit decline in the delivery of economic goods (on a continuous factor score that runs from -2 to +2), citizens perceive some 19 percent less democracy (B = .192). There is therefore little doubt that economic delivery is a core component in the basic calculus that Nigerian citizens first use to judge how much democracy their leaders are supplying. But the political dimension of public goods cannot be ignored. A package of explicitly political goods has almost equally strong direct initial effects on the dependent variable. For every whole unit decline in the provision of political goods (on a continuous factor score that runs from -2 to +2), citizens think they are getting 18 percent less democracy (B = .183). Hence, Nigerians also start out by asking themselves whether they are better off politically when judging if democracy is being constructed in their country.

Finally, Interactive Model 1, indicates that the effects of public goods on democratic sentiments are *mediated by the passage of time* (Table 3). Take economic goods first. The coefficient for the relevant interaction term (economic goods x time) is positive and significant (beta = .078), which indicates that the impact of economic delivery *increases over time*. In other words, as the transition recedes, considerations of economic performance become ever more important in the public mind. If this were the only significant interaction effect, we would have to conclude that economic considerations were displacing political ones over time. But observe the coefficient for the second interaction term (political

goods x time,  $\beta = .056$ ). It is also positive and significant. In short, the importance of the availability of political goods in building a constituency for democratic reform *also increases over time*, though to a slightly lesser degree.

In Table 3, we draw attention to the difference in the strength of the two interaction terms. We interpret this finding to mean that, in calculating the supply of democracy, the general public is gradually more likely to grant heavier weight to a basket of material, rather than political, goods. Stated differently, economic commodities are likely to loom ever larger over time in the overall hierarchy of public goods that citizens use to appraise democracy. On one hand, then, this result is consistent with the conventional view that, to survive, elected governments in poor countries must deliver improved social welfare.

On the other hand, let us not be too hasty in accepting an unmodified conventional wisdom. The results in the first interactive model hinge on the aggregate contents of the two baskets of goods represented by factor scores. The political basket contains both honest government and political order, which Nigerians consistently value as their *least* important criteria in judging democracy. Remember that these political goods rank seventh and eighth (out of eight) in an overall regression analysis of pooled data (See Table 2). The presence of political order and honest government in the factor scores depresses the direct and interactive effects of political goods in Model 1 (Table 3).

Hence, as a final check on the relative status of various public goods, we construct Interactive Model 2 (Table 4). Alongside the interaction terms, this model contains only the most important public goods revealed by previous analysis: representing the economic basket is mass opinion about the government's economic policy performance; and representing the political basket are public attitudes about the trustworthiness of the country's top leader. This model performs almost as well as the most encompassing model, explaining 35 percent of total variance in the supply of democracy, again with just 5 predictors. Elapsing time is now the dominant explanatory factor, reconfirming that Nigerians' shallow views about democracy were severely overblown by in 2000 and destined to deflate anyway ( $\beta = -.597$ ). But notice the interaction of time with the delivery of goods: while the passage of time

increases the impact of economic policy evaluations (beta = .160), it imparts even greater impact to the trustworthiness of leaders (beta = .236). In short, compared to the main economic good, the key political good not only remains resilient, but gains in salience over time.

**Table 4: Supply of Democracy, Interactive Model 2**

	B	S.E.	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	2.371	.036		65.330	.000
<b>Time Elapsed</b> (since transition, May 1999)	-.023	.001	-.597	-20.531	.000
Economic Policy Performance	.140	.011	.211	12.417	.000
<b>INTERACTION (Policy Perf. x Time)</b>	.003	.000	<b>.160</b>	6.631	.000
Trustworthy Political Leaders	.049	.013	.068	3.696	.000
<b>INTERACTION (Trust Leaders x Time)</b>	.004	.000	<b>.236</b>	9.754	.000
R = .592					
R square = .351					
Adjusted R square = .350					

Thus, what is surprising and original about the results for Nigeria, is that they demonstrate the *durability of political goods*. Far from being the passing popular preferences of a giddy post-transition honeymoon, considerations of political trust – and to a lesser extent, political rights – continue to inform Nigerian appraisals the quality of their new democracy. Even though they may be economically poor, Nigerians do not lapse into a crudely economic mindset, insisting that any political regime is acceptable as long as it delivers a stronger economy and better living standards. Instead, they require that, for democracy to be constructed, the government (and the president in particular) must also make good on promises to provide civil liberties and good governance. According to our analysis, Nigerians are more – not less – likely, to employ a political logic of this sort as turbulent transitions give way to normal day-to-day politics. If Nigeria is any example, then new democrats in poor countries are



even more likely to require the delivery of political goods in the years following a historic political transition than in its immediate aftermath.

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, the delivery of political goods is not only *central* to the formation of mass opinion about democracy but also *durable* over time, at least in the medium term following regime transitions. Many analysts now accept the first point, namely that popular appreciation of political goods is a central feature of early post-transition public opinion in various new democracies around the world. To our knowledge, the second point – concerning the longevity of such political influences – has not been emphasized before and remains controversial. Most analysts still harbor the suspicion that, sooner or later, the initial appeal of political goods will be replaced by hardheaded popular demands that democracy must deliver material development.

Because public opinion has evolved rapidly in Nigeria, the country constitutes a key case for testing this proposition. Following regime change, Nigerians at first expressed higher expectations for the performance of democracy than citizens in 15 other Afrobarometer countries. But their inflated hopes were never sustainable and were quickly punctured. The 50-point collapse in mass satisfaction with democracy over four years in Nigeria was larger and more rapid than anywhere else in Africa and even exceeds the 20-point drop recorded for Peru and Ecuador between 1996 and 2000 (Latinobarometro, 2004, 23). One might therefore expect that, in Nigeria, political goods would lose their original potency as public opinion came down to earth. That is, as satisfaction with democracy evaporated, ordinary people would be tempted to relapse into a materialist view of the world. Since the new political regime seemed inept, citizens could easily have lost faith in political reform, requiring only that any regime – democratic, authoritarian, or whatever – provide a better quality of economic life.

Yet, in the fifth year after political transition, Nigerians still make fulsome reference to political goods – especially trustworthy leaders, but also political rights – in judging the quality of the democracy. This holds true not only for the solid majority of Nigerians who continue to say they prefer

democracy, but also for the optimistic minority who continue to think that they are getting it. On the demand side, citizens overwhelmingly persist in citing political goods, especially political rights, in assessing whether democracy is their preferred form of government. If they estimate that leaders are trustworthy and that political rights are available, then they can overlook harsh economic policies, slow economic growth, or lagging living standards. Even as memories of the transition begin to fade, popular demand for democracy does not require an economic miracle.

On the supply side, however, the salience of economic considerations gradually increases over time, and in this respect there is merit to conventional wisdom about the economic instrumentalism of new democrats. Citizens begin to refer to the government's performance at implementing economic policies – to create jobs, control inflation, and distribute incomes – in judging whether democracy is being attained. But our research adds a critical qualification. In building democracy, citizen perceptions of sound policy performance only complement, and never displace, the equally important consideration of trustworthy leaders, a political good.

In a further qualification, we note that the salience of public goods varies over time. Take economic goods first. In judging the supply of democracy, citizens start out by considering (sociotropically) the general condition of the national economy. As time passes, however, they place more weight on the performance of particular economic policies. Perhaps this shift reflects a process of popular learning. Only after experiencing at first hand the policies of an elected government (which commonly include unpopular structural adjustment measures) are citizens able to decide whether democracy works to their advantage.

A different sort of shift affects political goods. At first, as on the demand side, citizens judge the supply of democracy in terms of the delivery of political rights. Their early enthusiasms about democratic achievements can be traced directly to their enjoyment of new freedoms of speech, association, and electoral choice. Over time, however, they come to realize that the exercise of these universal liberties is by no means guaranteed. Citizens instead look around for additional political criteria in determining the extent and quality of democracy, including whether new democratic institutions are

worthy of their trust. Where political institutions are generally weak – a characteristic not only of Nigeria, but also other low-income democracies, especially in Africa – citizens use a shortcut to this end. They hinge their judgments about the institutionalization of democracy on the perceived trustworthiness of the head of state, usually a national president.

To be sure, popular trust in a “big man” is a poor substitute for confidence in a solid set of functioning democratic institutions. Regime failures are not regarded as a systemic problem but tend to be attributed to the shortcomings of leadership. But trust in the president is a common yardstick that is readily available to citizens of new democracies in developing countries. And it continues to guide voting decisions and regime preferences for large parts of the electorate in established democracies in wealthy countries too. Perhaps one would prefer that citizens in new democracy gave higher priority to alternative political goods, like the establishment of political order and the practice clean and honest government. Our research shows that, as elements in the good governance equation, the delivery of these goods contribute positively to popular perceptions of the consolidation of democracy. But, once the thrill of the transition has subsided, the best predictor that citizens will both demand democracy and think they are being so supplied, is whether they think they can trust their leaders.

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## Description of Variables

### ATTITUDES TO DEMOCRACY

**Popular Demand for Democracy:** Mean scale of four items. Individual respondent's:

<i>Support for democracy</i>	1 = It doesn't matter what kind of government we have, 2 = Non-democratic government is sometimes acceptable, 3 = Democracy is always preferable
<i>Rejection of military rule</i>	1 = Strongly Approve, 2 = Approve, 3 = Neither, 4 = Disapprove, 5 = Strongly Disapprove
<i>Rejection of one-party rule</i>	1 = Strongly Approve, 2 = Approve, 3 = Neither, 4 = Disapprove, 5 = Strongly Disapprove
<i>Reject of one-man rule</i>	1 = Strongly Approve, 2 = Approve, 3 = Neither, 4 = Disapprove, 5 = Strongly Disapprove

**Perceived Supply of Democracy:** Mean construct of two items. Individual respondent's estimates of:

<i>Satisfaction with democracy</i>	1 = Not at all satisfied, 2 = Not very satisfied, 3 = Fairly satisfied, 4 = Very satisfied
<i>Extent of democracy</i>	1 = Not a democracy, 2 = A democracy with major problems, 3 = A democracy with minor problems, 4 = A full democracy

### ECONOMIC GOODS

**Improved Living Standards:** Mean scale of four items. Individual's assessment of:

<i>Personal present living conditions (PPLC)</i>	1 = Very bad, 2 = Bad, 3 = Neither good nor bad, 4 = Good, 5 = Very good
<i>PPLC compared to other Nigerians</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better
<i>PPLC compared to 12 months ago</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better
<i>Personal LC expected in 12 months time</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better

**Prosperous Economy:** Single item. Individual's assessment of:

<i>Country's present economic conditions</i>	1 = Very bad, 2 = Bad, 3 = Neither good nor bad, 4 = Good, 5 = Very good
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**Economic Reforms:** Single item. Individual's assessment of:

<i>Social impact of economic reforms</i>	1 = Hurt most people (strongly agree), 2 = Hurt most people (agree), 3 = Neither 4 = Helped most people (agree), 5 = Helped most people (strongly agree)
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**Policy Performance:** Mean scale of four items. Individual's assessment of:

<i>How government is handling job creation</i>	1 = Very badly, 2 = Fairly badly, 3 = Fairly well, 4 = Very well
<i>How government is handling price inflation</i>	1 = Very badly, 2 = Fairly badly, 3 = Fairly well, 4 = Very well
<i>How government is handling income inequality</i>	1 = Very badly, 2 = Fairly badly, 3 = Fairly well, 4 = Very well
<i>How government is handling food security</i>	1 = Very badly, 2 = Fairly badly, 3 = Fairly well, 4 = Very well

### POLITICAL GOODS

**Political Order:** Mean construct of two items. Individual's assessment of:

<i>Safety from crime and violence, present vs. past</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better
<i>How government is handling crime control</i>	1 = Very badly, 2 = Fairly badly, 3 = Fairly well, 4 = Very well

**Political Rights:** Mean scale of five items. Individual's assessment of:

<i>Freedom to say what you think, present vs. past</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better
<i>Freedom to join associations, present vs. past</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better
<i>Freedom to vote without pressure, present vs. past</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better
<i>Ability to influence government, present vs. past</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better
<i>Ability to get equal treatment, present versus past</i>	1 = Much worse, 2 = Worse, 3 = Same, 4 = Better, 5 = Much Better

**Honest Government:** Single item. Individual's assessment of:

<i>How government is handling control of corruption</i>	1 = Very badly, 2 = Fairly badly, 3 = Fairly well, 4 = Very well
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**Trustworthy Leaders:** Single item. Individual's assessment of:

<i>How much he or she trusts the President</i>	0 = Not at all, 1 = A little bit, 2 = A lot, 3 = A very great deal
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### TIME

<i>Time Elapsed</i>	Number of months from Nigeria's political transition (May 1999) until Afrobarometer surveys (Rounds 1, 1.5, and 2)
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## Summary Statistics

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min.	Max.
<b>ATTITUDES TO DEMOCRACY</b>					
Popular Demand for Democracy <sup>1</sup>	8227	2.380	.529	1	3
Perceived Supply of Democracy <sup>2</sup>	7958	2.578	.725	1	4
<b>ECONOMIC GOODS<sup>3</sup></b>					
Improved Living Standards <sup>4</sup>	8241	3.557	.780	1	5
Prosperous Economy	8241	2.670	1.370	1	5
Economic Reforms	8241	2.310	1.459	1	5
Policy Performance <sup>5</sup>	8241	2.508	1.093	1	5
<b>POLITICAL GOODS<sup>6</sup></b>					
Political Order <sup>7</sup>	8240	3.155	1.019	1	5
Political Rights <sup>8</sup>	8241	3.730	.750	1	5
Honest Government	8241	2.880	1.428	1	5
Trustworthy Leaders	8081	1.480	1.015	0	3
<b>TIME</b>	8241	26.060	18.470	8	52

<sup>1</sup> One unrotated factor (eigenvalue = 2.003) explains 36 percent of variance. Factor is reliable (Alpha = .659). All factor analyses are maximum likelihood, direct oblimin rotation. Component items listed in Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> Two items are strongly correlated ( $r = .437$ ). Construct is reliable (Alpha = .603)

<sup>3</sup> One unrotated factor (eigenvalue = 1.837) explains 43 percent of variance. Factor is reliable (Alpha = .654)

<sup>4</sup> One unrotated factor (eigenvalue = 2.132) explains 39 percent of variance. Factor is reliable (Alpha = .699)

<sup>5</sup> One unrotated factor (eigenvalue = 2.641) explains 55 percent of variance. Factor is reliable (Alpha = .828)

<sup>6</sup> One unrotated factor (eigenvalue = 2.155) explains 39 percent of variance. Factor is reliable (Alpha = .693)

<sup>7</sup> Two items are strongly correlated ( $r = .342$ ). Construct is not reliable (Alpha = .499)

<sup>8</sup> One unrotated factor (eigenvalue = 3.093) explains 53 percent of variance. Factor is reliable (Alpha = .839)





## Sampling Method

Afrobarometer surveys are based on national probability samples representing cross-sections of adult citizens in each country. The sample universe includes all citizens of voting age. Excluded are non-citizens and anyone under the age of 18 years on the day of the survey. The goal is to give every individual an equal chance of inclusion in the sample via random selection at every stage. In Nigeria, samples of 2200-3600 individuals allow inferences to national adult populations with a margin of error of no more than plus or minus 2 percent with a confidence level of 95 percent.

The design is a clustered, stratified, multi-stage, area probability sample. Sampling units of decreasing size are selected in four stages:

**Stage One: Primary Sampling Units (PSUs).** PSUs are census enumeration areas. The sample universe is stratified, first by administrative area (region) and then by residential locality (urban or rural). The sample is distributed across each locality in each region according to its share in the national population. In urban areas with extremely diverse housing patterns, an additional layer of stratification was added to ensure that the sample did not leave out high-density (especially informal) settlements.

PSUs are sampled within each stratum using random methods. Because PSUs have variant populations, the probability of including a PSU is proportionate to its population size (PPPS). The total number of PSUs is determined by calculating the maximum acceptable degree of clustering. Because PSUs can be geographically small and socially homogenous, we accept no more than 8 interviews per PSU.

If important minority groups are missed or covered too scantily to allow generalizations, then over-sampling is introduced, along with post hoc weighting to correct the data.

**Stage Two: Selecting Sampling Start Points (SSPs).** Within each PSU, field teams (usually consisting of one field supervisor and four interviewers) travel to a randomly selected start point. The SSP further clusters the sample into manageable areas that are reachable on foot or by a short vehicle ride. Using PSU maps from the census bureau, the field supervisor chooses a start point using a numbered grid and a table of random numbers. The SSP is marked on the map, and given to the field team for that area, who then locate the nearest housing settlement. The logic of random sampling is to avoid any kind of pattern in the units selected at any stage. Thus, at the start point, the supervisor rotates the place where interviewers begin their walk pattern. If the team starts on a main road at one SSP, they start off the road at the next SSP. If the Team starts in a central place (like a school) in one PSU, they start in a peripheral place in the next PSU. And so on.

**Stage Three: Selecting Households.** Fanning out from the SSP, the field team selects households. The Afrobarometer defines a household as a group of people who presently eat together from the same pot. In multi-household dwelling structures (like apartment blocks, housing compounds with multiple spouses, or backyard dwellings for renters, relatives, or household workers), each household is treated as a separate sampling unit.

The interviewers are instructed to walk away from the SSP as follows: interviewer 1 walks towards the sun, interviewer 2 away from the sun, interviewer 3 at right angle to interviewer 1, interviewer 4 in the opposite direction from Interviewer 3. The team applies a day code to randomly establish an interval (n) for household selection. It is calculated by adding together the numbers in the day of the month: on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of the month the interval is 5, but on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> it is 6. And so on. In every case, the interviewer selects the nth house on the right. Each interviewer obtains two interviews per PSU (4 interviewers x 2 interviews = 8 interviews).

**Stage Four: Selecting Individual Respondents.** Once the household is identified, the interviewer randomly selects an individual respondent from within the household. To ensure that women are not underrepresented, the Afrobarometer sets a gender quota of an equal number of men and women in the overall sample, accomplish by alternating interviews by gender. First, the interviewer determines from the previous interview whether a male or female respondent is required. The interviewer then lists the first names of all the household members of that gender who are at least 18 years old, even those not presently at home but who will return during that day. From the list, the person to be interviewed is selected by asking a household member to choose a numbered card from a blind deck of cards.

The interview is conducted only with the selected person and no one else in that household. If an interview is refused, the interviewer substitutes the household by continuing the walk pattern and again selecting the nth dwelling on the right. Note: in the Afrobarometer, we substitute households, not respondents.

If, on the first try, the interviewer finds no one at home in the selected household, he/she makes one return call later in the day. Or, if the designated respondent is not at home, the interviewer makes an appointment to meet them later in the day. Again, a return call will be necessary in order to find the selected respondent and to conduct the interview. It is also acceptable for the interviewer to ascertain the whereabouts of the selected respondent (they may be at work) and, if nearby, to walk to that place to conduct the interview.

If the return call is unsuccessful, say because the respondent has still not come home for the appointment, then, and only then, the interviewer may substitute the household.

#### **Outcome Rates<sup>9</sup>** (percentages)

	Round 1 <sup>10</sup>	Round 1.5	Round 2
Contact Rate	85.5	88.3	91.3
Cooperation Rate	92.7	66.2	67.1
Refusal Rate	7.9	13.1	15.8
Response Rate	78.7	58.5	61.3

<sup>9</sup> Formulae derived from the American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2004. *Standard Definitions: Final Disposition of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Lenexa, Kansas: AAPOR.

<sup>10</sup> Since information on unsuccessful calls is incomplete in the first survey, figures for Round 1 are estimates.

