Working Paper No. 52

SEEKING THE DEMOCRATIC DIVIDEND: PUBLIC ATTITUDES AND ATTEMPTED REFORM IN NIGERIA

by Peter Lewis and Etannibi Alemika

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

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by Peter Lewis and Etannibi Alemika

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SEEKING THE DEMOCRATIC DIVIDEND: PUBLIC ATTITUDES AND ATTEMPTED REFORM IN NIGERIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The third Afrobarometer survey in Nigeria was conducted in September-October 2003. This survey of public attitudes follows on previous polls undertaken in January-February 2000 and in August 2001. The 2003 survey was administered by the Afrobarometer research network in collaboration with Management Systems International. The Lagos-based firm Research and Marketing Services conducted the fieldwork and processed questionnaire data. Drs. Peter Lewis (American University), Etannibi Alemika (University of Jos), and Michael Bratton (Michigan State University), along with Derek Yul Davids (IDASA, South Africa), directed survey design, oversaw implementation and analyzed survey results. Funding was provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The survey drew upon a nationally-representative, random sample of Nigerians. All six of the country's informal geopolitical zones were covered, including 29 of the 36 states. In all, 2428 Nigerians of voting age were interviewed to find out what ordinary people think about recent political and economic developments, and to assess changes in popular attitudes since the 1999 transition from military rule to a civilian regime.

With this survey, the Afrobarometer tracked Nigerian public opinion throughout the crucial first term of civilian rule. The first survey in 2000 was conducted just six months after the inauguration of the new government. The 2003 poll measured public views five months after national elections for the Presidency and the legislature, and three months after the inauguration of President Olusegun Obasanjo for a second term in office.

Results from three surveys allow greater confidence in making observations about the patterns of Nigerian public opinion over time. In previous discussions, we noted the sanguine responses of many Nigerians to the initial transition, and the growing sense of disenchantment as euphoria gave way to realism in the early years of civilian rule. Public expressions of satisfaction with democracy dropped sharply in 2001, along with approval of government performance, and trust in key institutions and public officials. General preferences for democracy also declined, though not nearly as much as political satisfaction. Nigerians continued to reject military rule by a large majority, and they were committed to many core democratic values. There was also evidence of broad civic engagement. We concluded at that time that Nigerians had come "down to earth" in their assessments of politics and the economy, though there was still a reservoir of democratic attachments.

The 2003 survey reveals further decline in popular assessments of the political and economic system, indicating a basic disaffection among much of the Nigerian public. At the time of the transition from military rule, Nigerians expected a "democracy dividend" in the form of better governance, an improved economy, and rising personal welfare. For the most part, *the Nigerian public today feels that they have failed to see a democracy dividend*, and they are increasingly critical of government, ambivalent about the democratic regime, and divided about the future direction of the economy. We address political, economic, and social themes in turn.

Nigerians are discouraged by the performance of democracy…

- **Nigerians are deeply dissatisfied with the performance of democracy.** The proportion of Nigerians who say they are relatively satisfied with "the way democracy works in Nigeria" plummeted to 35

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percent, down from 57 percent in 2001 and 84 percent in 2000. The drop of nearly 50 percentage points indicates widespread discontent with the character and direction of the political process.

◙ **The public is unhappy with the government's handling of key issues and problems.** Only a minority of Nigerians approve of the government's overall management of the economy, or its efforts to create jobs, manage inflation, decrease economic inequalities, provide basic services, or combat corruption. Ratings of policy performance have dropped significantly in two years, and in many instances approval ratings are down by two-thirds since 2000.

◙ **Nigerians are also discouraged by the performance of elected officials.** Evaluations of key officials continue to decline, and a limited proportion of Nigerians currently approve of the performance of their National Assembly representative (32 percent) or their Local Government chair (39 percent). About half offer positive ratings of state governors.

◙ **Approval for the President has dropped substantially.** In September 2003, 39 percent of the public offered a positive evaluation of President Obasanjo's performance, compared with 72 percent in 2001. Expressions of trust for the President also lessened to 58 percent (down from 90 percent in 2000), and just 3 percent trust the President "a very great deal." A majority of Nigerians (56 percent) believe that the President frequently "ignores the Constitution," a large increase from 23 percent who held this view in 2001.

◙ **Trust in major institutions has also diminished.** The percentage of citizens who say they trust the National Assembly "a little," "a lot," or "a very great deal," dropped from 67 percent in 2001 to 51 percent in 2003. There has also been significant decline in trust for state and local governments and political parties.

◙ **Nigerians are much more critical of the integrity of elections.** In two surveys (2000 and 2003) conducted shortly after elections, citizens offered very different evaluations. Following the transitional elections of 2000, some 72 percent of Nigerians thought the presidential election was conducted "fairly" or "very honestly," and 76 percent believed the state elections were honest. Following the second elections in 2003, just 40 percent felt the presidential poll was honest, and 44 percent expressed confidence in the integrity of state polls. Furthermore, trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) slipped from 66 percent (2000) to 46 percent (2003). Seven in ten people also believe that competition between political parties leads to conflict.

...But they show resilience in their support for democracy…

◙ **Nigerians continue to prefer democracy as the best system for the country.** Despite widespread disillusionment with the actual performance of government, support for a *democratic regime* is fairly resilient. In the most recent survey, 68 percent of Nigerians prefer democracy to any other kind of government. This is down just slightly from 71 percent in 2001 (within our margin of error).

◙ **Public resistance to non-democratic options is still strong, though somewhat reduced.** Nigerians, at consistently high rates since 2001, reject the ideas of a presidential "strongman" (80 percent) or one-party rule (72 percent). Citizens also reject military rule by a majority of 69 percent, though this is down from 81 percent in the previous survey. A slight majority of Nigerians (55 percent) now expresses some degree of trust for the military, though only 17 percent trust the armed forces "a lot," and just 3 percent trust them "a very great deal."

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◙ **Public patience with democracy is strained.** In the latest survey, 58 percent of Nigerians believe "the present system should be given more time" to deal with problems, while 38 percent believe that if the present system cannot produce results soon, "we should try another form of government." Expressions of patience have dropped about 20 percentage points since 2000, while the percentage of those willing to consider an alternative to democracy doubled between 2000 and 2003. Overall, the proportion of citizens who reject all three non-democratic options noted above declined from 76 percent in 2000 to 51 percent at present.

Despite concerns, citizens continue to subscribe to democratic practices and values…

◙ **Nigerians show considerable continuity in their views on democratic practices.** Strong preferences for fair elections and limits on executive power have held steady in recent years, while a majority (59 percent) continue to stress the value of having many political parties. On balance, Nigerians prefer tolerance for different opinions (53 percent) rather than insisting on consensus (46 percent).

◙ **The public perceives an erosion in political rights and democratic processes.** In 2001, nine of ten Nigerians expressed no concerns about freely expressing their political views, while in 2003, a majority (58 percent) felt they frequently "had to be careful" about what they said. Citizens also make less favorable comparisons between current conditions and those under previous military regimes: while a majority still believes that freedom of speech, association, and electoral choice have improved, favorable ratings of the condition of rights and liberties are down by 20 percentage points from the previous survey.

…And public engagement with politics remains high:

◙ **Interest in politics remains widespread.** About eight in ten citizens say they are interested in politics, and three-fourths say they discuss political affairs. Half of those responding in 2003 said they had gotten together with others to raise an issue of concern.

◙ **Political participation remains strong.** In the 2003 survey, 57 percent of Nigerians said they had attended a community meeting and 73 percent reported they had voted in the presidential elections. Also, 16 percent participated in protest actions. These levels match or exceed the participation reported in previous surveys.

◙ **Civic activity is also robust.** Nine out of ten Nigerians belong to some community or religious organization, and about six in ten are active members. Participation in unions, farmers' organizations, professional or business groups, and development associations, has stabilized at levels considerably higher than in 2000.

◙ **Nigerians feel a declining sense of political efficacy.** Although participation is widespread, fewer Nigerians feel that their engagement in politics makes a difference. More people (74 percent) are bewildered by political affairs, fewer believe those close to them listen to their political views, and many fewer believe that ordinary people are able to influence government. There is still optimism, however, that citizens can unite to make political leaders listen to their concerns.

◙ **There is still a large distance between average citizens and elected leaders.** Only one in ten Nigerians believe that elected leaders commonly listen to them or look out for their interests, and a small proportion say they have contacted a party leader or elected official in the past year. Nigerians are far more likely to turn to religious leaders, traditional rulers, leaders in local development associations, or other influential persons when seeking help for their problems.

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With regard to the economy, assessments are increasingly negative:

◙ **Nigerians continue to emphasize economic problems as their highest priorities.** When asked to identify the nation's leading problems, the public mentions jobs, poverty, the petrol crisis, overall economic management, education and corruption most frequently. The fuel crisis and corruption are new additions to the list of leading problems, while the other concerns have consistently been among those emphasized by citizens.

◙ **The public is increasingly unhappy with the state of the economy.** Assessments of current economic conditions are markedly worse than in earlier surveys: just 31 percent now view the country's economic conditions as good, and 35 percent say that conditions have gotten better in the past year. And only about one-third approve of the government's economic management.

There is continued ambivalence about the nature and direction of the economy:

◙ **Fewer people believe that democracy has brought economic benefits.** Fewer citizens believe that the democratic era has brought improvements in such economic dimensions as the availability of goods, employment, the general standard of living, social inequalities, or the enforcement of property rights. Six in ten believe things will get better in the next year, though optimism is down by nearly 20 points since 2001.

◙ **Nigerians are divided on their preferred economic system.** Half of those in the 2003 survey express a clear preference for a market economy, while one-third would prefer a government-run economy. While 60 percent endorsed an economy in which market decisions are left to individuals, 40 percent were favorably disposed toward an economy in which government makes decisions about production and distribution.

◙ **Views on democracy and markets do not always go together.** About seven in ten Nigerians prefer a democratic political regime, while half prefer a market-based economic regime. The percentage of "market democrats," who prefer both democracy and markets, declined to 40 percent in 2003 (from 46 percent in 2001). A notable segment of the public (30 percent) prefers democracy but not a market economy.

◙ **Nigerians believe government should play an active role in the economy, with some reservations.** A majority (56 percent) believe that government should provide for the well-being of the people, rather than emphasizing personal self-reliance. Half of Nigerians support a government role in agricultural marketing. Yet a majority of Nigerians are wary of the role of economic experts (especially foreign experts); just 36 percent believe they should make important economic decisions.

◙ **The public continues to be concerned about social inequality.** Nearly six in ten Nigerians believe there should be a priority on avoiding "large gaps between rich and poor," and almost three-fourths believe that government economic policies have "hurt most people and only benefited a few." Overall, just 24 percent of respondents believe the government's policies have broadly benefited Nigerians.

◙ **Nigerians continue to hold mixed views on policies to reform the economy.** While the public adamantly opposes civil service retrenchment (80 percent) and largely favors trade protection (61 percent), school fees are also accepted by a majority (64 percent).

◙ **The public is less patient with economic reform.** Patience for reform increased substantially from 2000 to 2001, only to wear thin in 2003. Currently, 40 percent of Nigerians believe the costs of reform

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are too high and government should abandon its policies, while 53 percent believe it is necessary to accept hardships now in order for the economy to improve in the future. There is also declining satisfaction with the government's efforts to reduce its economic role (34 percent now, down from 51 percent in 2001).

There is widespread deprivation and increased pessimism about personal conditions:

◙ **Nigerians are generally downbeat about their personal circumstances.** For the first time since the transition, a minority (46 percent) of respondents rank their personal economic circumstances favorably, and the same low proportion believes their conditions have improved in the past year. Three-fourths look to improvements over the next year, down slightly from the previous survey. Nigerians also continue to see themselves as downwardly mobile, ranking themselves lower than their parents' generation on a scale of living standards. Still, most people make optimistic projections for their children's lives.

◙ **There is evidence of continued hardship and diverse coping strategies.** Based on self-reporting, the survey shows continuing high levels of unemployment, underemployment, and shortages of basic goods and services including food, water, health care and cash income. Nigerians often turn to kin or community for help with necessities, although many simply do without. Nearly half of Nigerians borrow money from family or friends, and a substantial percentage relies on remittances from family working elsewhere in the country or abroad.

◙ **Views on the economy influence satisfaction with democracy.** There is a large difference in democratic satisfaction between those with positive assessments of the country's economy (or their personal living conditions) and those with negative assessments. Six in ten with a positive evaluation of the national economy are satisfied with democracy, compared with only one-fifth of those who view the economy negatively.

Turning to issues of social identity:

◙ **Nigerians are increasingly likely to emphasize their ethnic identities.** Ethnicity has always been important in Nigeria, but ethnic identities often compete with identities of religion, occupation, gender or class. In this survey, there has been a clear shift among the public to emphasize ethnicity as their basic identity. Overall, "communal" identities (religion and ethnicity) are emphasized by two-thirds of respondents in the 2003 survey.

◙ **Among Africans, Nigerians are more likely to stress ethnicity.** In the latest survey, 48 percent of Nigerians identified themselves by ethnic or language group. Only Lesotho (49 percent) is comparable. Nigerians are more ethnically-identified than South Africans (10 percent), Kenyans (14 percent), Senegalese (32 percent) or Ghanaians (37 percent).

◙ **Within Africa, Nigerians' emphasis on national identity is moderate**. Forty-two percent of Nigerians emphasize their national identity over group identities, placing the country right around the middle of the 15-country Afrobarometer sample. People in Mali, Lesotho, Tanzania, Mozambique and Cape Verde have stronger national identities, while those in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Senegal, and Ghana show lower national identification.

◙ **Nigerians do not feel a strong sense of relative deprivation.** When asked to compare economic conditions for their identity group with that of others, 29 percent believe they are doing better, while 36

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percent feel they are doing worse and 27 percent say their conditions are about the same. There has been a slight shift toward feelings of deprivation in the past two years.

◙ **Different identity groups perceive different treatment by government.** Asked whether their group is ever treated unfairly government, ethnic and economically-defined identity groups are more likely to believe they are poorly treated than are those who profess a religious identity.

◙ **People of different identities vary on important political and economic views.** Nigerians who ascribe to either economic or ethnic identities are more pessimistic about the economy, less satisfied with democracy, and somewhat less supportive of a democratic regime than those who profess a religious identity. While the large majority of citizens support a united Nigeria, those with an ethnic identity are most likely to support the idea of breaking the country apart (25 percent).

Security and conflict are important concerns:

◙ **Nigerians view social conflict as a widespread problem.** Some 87 percent of citizens see violent conflict as a common occurrence nationally (13 percent see these problems as frequent), while seven of ten Nigerians report some violent conflicts within their own communities (12 percent frequently). About half also report some occurrence of domestic violence. Perceptions of violent conflict have not increased since 2001.

◙ **The public has changing views on the sources of conflict, and possible solutions.** In 2003 (following the election season), Nigerians were somewhat more likely to attribute conflict to political rivalries, and somewhat less likely to identify religion or land/boundary disputes as sources of violence when compared to views in 2001. Citizens are more willing to turn to government security forces to resolve conflicts, and less inclined to look to communities, religious institutions or traditional rulers to address conflicts. Yet there is also a substantial drop in confidence in the government's efforts to deal with conflicts in the country.

◙ **Public tolerance for political violence has not increased.** There has been a slight rise in 2003 in the proportion of Nigerians who reject political violence (73 percent) and vigilante actions (81 percent). The proportion of people who admit to engaging in some political violence (7 percent) is virtually unchanged from the previous survey.

◙ **Crime and personal security remain general concerns.** About four in ten Nigerians report fearing crime in their homes within the previous year, while one-third have been victims of theft or robbery, and one in five has been physically attacked. Self-reported crime has not increased since 2001, but remains at distressingly high levels.

Corruption and the development of a rule of law also present major problems:

◙ **Nigerians are increasingly discouraged by the incidence of corruption.** In terms of subjective perceptions, Nigerians increasingly believe their leading officials and institutions are highly corrupt. Perceptions of corruption are highest for the police (where 70 percent of the public believes "most" or "all" of them are corrupt), followed by border officials (57 percent), government officials (55 percent), elected leaders (54 percent) and officials in the office of the President (50 percent). Those with greatest integrity in the eyes of the public are teachers (28 percent of Nigerians perceive them to be corrupt), traditional rulers (28 percent) and religious leaders (18 percent). Public approval of the government's corruption-fighting efforts has dropped sharply from 48 percent (2001) to 24 percent (2003).

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◙ **The reported occurrence of bribery has not increased in recent years.** While Nigerians are more likely to perceive corruption, they do not report having to offer bribes more frequently for important services such as permits, schooling, household services, or border crossings. (Perceptions of corruption may refer to other types of misconduct besides bribery, such as nepotism, favoritism, fraud, embezzlement, etc.).

◙ **Nigerians share many values supportive of the rule of law.** The public increasingly believes that the legislature, rather than the executive, should make laws for the country (77 percent in 2003). There is also overwhelming support for private property rights (89 percent) and strong acceptance of equal rights and treatment for women (70 percent).

◙ **There is diminishing confidence in central institutions of law and security.** Nigerians express somewhat lower levels of respect for the courts, police, and tax authorities, although a majority of citizens still recognize the authority of these institutions. There is diminished trust in the courts and the police, but a slight increase since 2001 in trust for the armed forces.

Nigerians in various regions hold different views on key political questions…

◙ **There is wide variation across regions on preferences for democracy.** Support for democracy has dropped below two-thirds in Lagos, the South-South, Southeast and North Central regions; preference for a non-democratic government significantly increased in these regions. By contrast, support for a democratic regime has rebounded in the Northwest (to 77 percent), which is the region that shows the strongest preference for democracy, along with the Southwest (75 percent). We surmise that trends in political partisanship and the varying quality of elections explain many of these shifts.

◙ **Other attitudes toward democratic government also vary across regions.** Some regions where support for democracy is lowest (Lagos, SE, S-S) are also areas where citizens are among the least satisfied with democracy, and most critical of the character of the democratic system. Comparative satisfaction with democracy is considerably higher in the northern states, where more citizens are also inclined to see Nigeria as a "full democracy" or a democracy with minor problems. Patience with the democratic system is also relatively greater in the north, and among citizens in the Southwest.

◙ **Nigerians in different regions differ widely in their views of the 2003 elections.** Nationwide, there was a dramatic decline in confidence in the integrity of the 2003 elections. Disaffection was most pronounced in the Southeast and South-South, where only about one in ten citizens believed that the 2003 presidential election was conducted relatively honestly. Other areas of discontent included the Northwest and Lagos, where only a minority endorsed the conduct of the presidential poll. A majority of those in the Southwest, Northeast and Middle Belt states were content with the election.

◙ **People in different regions also show varying tolerance for non-democratic political alternatives.** Citizens in Lagos, for instance, are most strongly opposed to one-party rule or a presidential "strongman," but far less resistant to the idea of military rule. Generally, citizens in the Southwest, Northwest and Middle Belt are most strongly opposed to military rule, those in Lagos and the Southwest most opposed to "strongman" rule, and those in Lagos, the Southeast and the Northwest most strongly resistant to the idea of one-party rule. Nigerians in the Northeast are least likely to reject any of these non-democratic alternatives.

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… And on the economy:

◙ **Nigerians have different preferences for economic systems:** Citizens in the Southwest, the South-South and Lagos show the strongest preferences for a market economy, while those in the Northeast, the Southeast and the Middle Belt are most inclined toward a government-run economy. Contrary to common belief, these views do not cluster along a north-south axis.

◙ **Assessments of economic conditions vary greatly.** In the states of the Niger Delta, only 14 percent of citizens rate the country's economic condition as good (81 percent as relatively bad), a profile closely matched by those in the Southeast and Lagos. By contrast, 57 of those in the Northeast, and about half in the Northwest, view national economic conditions favorably.

◙ **Views on economic reform are also quite different.** The harshest assessments of economic reform are found in Lagos, the Southeast, South-South and Middle Belt, where about eight in ten people believe the government's policies have "hurt most people and only benefited a few." About two-thirds of citizens in the Northwest and Southwest hold this view. In the Northeast, a majority (55 percent) agree, while 42 percent believe these policies have "helped most people [and] only a few have suffered."

◙ **The regions also reflect quite different levels of patience for economic reform.** Despite their critical views of government policies, citizens in Lagos, North Central and the Northwest are most likely to accept hardships now "in order for the economy to get better in the future." A majority of those in the Southeast and the Northeast, by contrast, believe "the costs of reforming the economy are too high; government should therefore abandon its current economic policies." Patience for reform is only loosely related to evaluations of reform policies, and does not reflect a north-south division.

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SEEKING THE DEMOCRATIC DIVIDEND: PUBLIC ATTITUDES AND ATTEMPTED REFORM IN NIGERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

The Challenges of Democratic Change

Nigeria has had a long, difficult quest for stable governance and democracy. In the period since independence in 1960, the military has ruled Nigeria for twenty-nine years. Two civilian governments – the First Republic (1960-66) and the Second Republic (1979-83) – descended into corruption and conflict, and were overthrown by 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 political repression, assassinations, massive corruption, economic decline and the erosion of critical public institutions. Abacha's sudden death in 1998 opened the door to a new political transition. 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 administration faced a daunting array of social, economic and political problems, many of which were a legacy from the misrule of preceding regimes. The Nigerian people greeted the political transition with an enthusiasm often shading into euphoria. The public hoped 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 endemic corruption and the establishment of more effective and accountable government. This was a high threshold of success for any government.

Regrettably, few of these early hopes have been realized, and many Nigerians feel that a democracy dividend has utterly eluded them. Citizens have been dismayed by political infighting and stalemate, a stagnant economy, escalating social violence, and a perception that political elites are aloof and self-interested. The first term of civilian rule brought many disappointments in crucial areas of governance, leadership, economic change, social inclusion and domestic security. There has been a precipitous decline in public satisfaction with democracy, lower assessments of government performance, diminishing trust in leading institutions and reduced faith in elected officials. Despite widespread disillusionment, however, Nigerians have been fairly resilient in their support for democracy as the preferred political system for the country.

The Afrobarometer, an international survey research network, began to track public attitudes in the wake of Nigeria's political transition.[1] We are interested in the views of Nigerians on issues of democracy and political reform, markets and economic policy change, social conditions, personal identity and government performance. The opinions, values, and actions of average citizens form an essential component of democratic legitimacy and performance, and an understanding of public opinion is therefore crucial for gauging the nation's efforts at reform. Nigeria has a sporadic history of survey research, especially since political constraints and difficult logistics made such polling impossible for many years. Fortunately, the new political atmosphere has opened opportunities for conducting surveys and freely soliciting the views of citizens. Since our initial survey in early 2000 (just six months after the inauguration of the new civilian regime), Afrobarometer has conducted additional surveys in August 2001 and September-October 2003, providing an unprecedented portrait of Nigerian public attitudes and their changes over time

Nigerians began their latest democratic experiment with a weak legacy of institutions and democratic practices. The military-crafted constitution included many unfamiliar provisions, the new legislature contained a large number of political newcomers, and the emerging political parties lacked strong

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constituencies. The transition polls, hastily prepared through untested election machinery, were shadowed by widespread irregularities. However, Nigerians were anxious for the departure of the military and there was broad public acceptance of the election results. During its early weeks in office, the new administration laid out ambitious objectives for reforming the military, bolstering political rights, increasing government accountability, attacking corruption, reviving and restructuring the economy, and meeting the basic needs of Nigerians. The first Afrobarometer survey, conducted just sixth months after the inauguration, showed public enthusiasm for the government's agenda and considerable approval of its performance.

The emerging political elites of the Fourth Republic encountered many difficulties in shaping democratic processes and relationships. Early controversies swirled around the legislature and the separation of powers. The National Assembly was buffeted by the impeachment of two Senate Presidents and a House Speaker, public controversies over their allowances and perquisites, and disputes over legislative rules. The legislature entered into a mutually-contentious relationship with the President, creating an impasse over the annual budget and delaying laws regarding corruption, elections, and the Niger Delta, among others. This acrimony led ultimately to a bid to impeach President Obasanjo in the months prior to the 2003 electoral season. The President was also embroiled in a number of political skirmishes with state governors, adding to dissent within the governing party and several states around the country. Critics of the President blamed his brusque style and imperious attitude for these problems, while others emphasized the fractiousness and opportunism of politicians seeking to limit the executive's reach.

Economic reform was an urgent priority for the nation. Nigeria's centralized, oil-based economy has suffered for decades from corruption, 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, the new government promised new principles of transparency, more effective economic policies, and greater benefits from the international economy. Relief from the nation's oppressive $31 billion external debt was among the administration's key goals, and indeed many Nigerians felt that debt cancellation might be an early dividend of democratic transition. Progress on debt relief, however, required headway on economic reform, including accord with the IMF and other international financial institutions. There was slow movement on these issues, and although Nigeria eventually concluded an IMF agreement in 2000, it soon became dormant because of disagreements over compliance. Meanwhile, the government was unable to launch a consistent economic program, and there was little evidence of success in the fight against corruption. Joblessness, poor infrastructure, and anemic growth aggravated public frustration.

Another critical problem is the rising tide of social tension and communal violence. During the four years following the transition to civil rule, more than fifty incidents of violence claimed at least 10,000 lives across the country. These conflicts did not have a single motive or trigger. They included large-scale riots with a religious or ethnic dimension (e.g. Kaduna 2000 and 2002, Kano 2001, Jos 2001), local disputes over land or boundaries (e.g. Tiv-Jukun and Warri), violence directed at government or foreign corporations (Niger Delta), state-instigated violence against restivecommunities (Odi in 1999 and Zaki Biam in 2001), clashes among vigilante groups (Lagos, Sagamu, Onitsha) and conflict among political factions (Rivers). Two major sources of instability are the growing restiveness 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 many partisan militias and several high-profile assassinations. Moreover, fears of crime and ethnic anxieties have encouraged the formation of vigilante groups which often serve as catalysts of violence. This pervasive insecurity has unsettled many Nigerians and increased criticisms of government failures to contain conflict.

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The national and state elections held in April-May 2003 marked both achievements and profound difficulties for the new democratic regime. On the positive side, the elections were held in a relatively peaceful, stable atmosphere, with less violence and political turmoil than was evident in previous civilian-administered elections in 1964 and 1983. The losing parties, though deeply aggrieved, pursued their complaints through the judicial system. This permitted a peaceful 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 corruption and misconduct among political elites, and widespread mistrust of the process. Nigerian and foreign observer teams documented numerous, flagrant violations of electoral rules in many regions and at all levels of administration. The lack of faith in transparent and competitive elections is reflected in public views from the 2003 survey.

Against this changing background, the Afrobarometer seeks to understand public opinions on a range of social, economic and political issues. We are particularly interested in basic preferences about the political and economic systems, and how these values relate to one another. Another crucial question is how citizens' preferences for a democratic regime (or a particular type of economy, whether market-oriented or government-controlled) are influenced by their assessments of current government policy and performance. Moreover, in view of Nigeria's long history of military rule and efforts at democratization, we are concerned with basic questions of democratic legitimacy, and the relative tolerance of Nigerians for non-democratic alternatives. Issues relating to identity, national affinities, and general social conditions are also important topics.

Background to the 2003 Survey

As with previous Afrobarometer surveys, the 2003 study was designed as a national sample survey, meaning that we posed the same set of questions to a small sample of the population who were selected to represent the adult population of Nigeria as a whole. The target population for the survey was citizens of Nigeria, namely persons at least 18 years old and eligible to vote. To draw a representative cross-section of the voting age population, a random sample was designed.

The survey covered all six geopolitical regions of the country, including 29 of the 36 states, with the number of interviews in each region being proportional to the region's population size. To adapt the questionnaire to local conditions, we translated the English version into major local languages: Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. All interviews were administered in the language of the respondent's choice. Field translations were also conducted in pidgin English, Tiv, Efik, Ijaw, Kanuri, Nupe and other languages. The survey questionnaire included items that had been asked in previous surveys in Nigeria and in other countries, so as to provide a basis for comparing Nigeria with other African nations as well as other regions of the world.

The Afrobarometer conducted the survey in collaboration with Management Systems International (MSI).[2] A Nigerian survey research firm, Research and Marketing Services (RMS), conducted the fieldwork, assisted with sampling methods, and processed questionnaire data. Drs. Peter Lewis (American University), Etannibi Alemika (University of Jos), Michael Bratton (Michigan State University), and Derek Davids (IDASA) directed survey design, oversaw implementation, and analyzed survey results. A summary of the social background of the sample is presented in the last column of the following table:

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Table 1: Social and Economic Characteristics of the Samples

	2000 Survey	2001 Survey	2003 Survey
Number of People Surveyed	3,603	2,190	2,428
Male : Female Ratio (%)	50 : 50	50 : 50	50 : 50
Median Age[3]	29	29	28
Urban : Rural Ratio (%)[4]	43 : 57	49 : 51	51 : 49
Education (%)			
No formal schooling	25	26	22
Primary only	17	17	16
Secondary only	37	38	43
Post-secondary	21	19	19
Occupation[5]			
Informal marketer	19	16	14
Student	15	17	20
Farmer/fisherman	13	21	18
Housewife	13	11	11
Artisan	11	3	6
Businessperson	6	7	9
Government employee	6	5	5
Languages (total no.)	85+	84+	n/a
Hausa	31	24	24
Yoruba	26	23	23
Igbo	17	17	17
Ijaw[6]	2	5	5
Income (%)			
No earnings (students, dependents, etc.)	15	12	16
Less than 5,000 naira/month	72	78 (< ₦ 6,000)	63 (< ₦ 8,000)
More than 30,000 naira/month	2	2 (> ₦ 50,000)	3 (> ₦ 50,000)

Note: Because figures do not include all responses, they do not total 100 percent.

The sample for the most recent survey was 2428 persons, allowing a high level of confidence in the results. The statistical criteria of survey research tell us that the current sample provides a confidence level of 95 percent with a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2.0 percent.[7]

The 2003 survey sampled a somewhat lower proportion of rural respondents and a correspondingly greater urban share. This reflects improved data and updated estimates of the true level of urbanization in Nigeria. At the same time, our sampling and field methods permit us to reach out more effectively to rural residents in small settlements and isolated areas, improving the representation of the sample in rural districts.

As can be seen in Table 1, the 2003 sample is quite similar in most respects to previous samples, being almost identical in the distribution of gender, age, and education. The language and religious distributions are similar from year to year. There is some variation in the occupational groups covered by the survey, though most differences are within the margin of error. Income distribution (despite slight changes in measurement) was also comparable.

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Table1 points to the diversity of social factors that may influence opinions and attitudes. In much of the discussion that follows, we focus on results from the national sample as a whole. In the course of our analysis, we have considered the effects of several different social characteristics (including gender, age, education, and income) on citizens' views. In many instances these factors did not meaningfully influence opinions, and so we report only the overall (national) results. In the later sections of the paper, we consider the influences of social identity and region on attitudes.

II. ASSESSMENTS OF NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY

Support for and Satisfaction with Democracy

As a starting point for understanding Nigerian citizens' views on democracy, we consider two broad measures: relative support for democracy as an ideal system (the *regime of democracy*), and satisfaction with the *actual performance* of democracy, which mainly reflects on the government in office. In the first instance, the survey asks whether citizens prefer democracy in all circumstances, whether they might consider a non-democratic regime, or whether they are indifferent to the country's type of government. The results from all Nigerian surveys are shown below in Table 2:

Table 2: Support for Democracy in Nigeria 2000-2003 (%)

	2000	2001	**2003**
Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government	80	71	**68**
In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.	10	15	**20**
For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have	10	12	**11**

Nigerians' preferences for the system of democracy have clearly weakened since the transition from authoritarian rule. While 80 percent of citizens unquestionably supported democracy in the year 2000, 68 percent affirm democratic preferences in the 2003 survey. Also, the proportion of people willing to accept a non-democratic government has doubled, from 10 to 20 percent. It is significant that support for democracy has dipped only slightly since 2001 (within the survey's margin of error), and that only two of ten Nigerians openly question a democratic regime. While affinities for democracy reflect a worrisome decline, we do not observe a crisis in democratic support.

Turning to the question of democratic performance, however, we see emphatically negative reactions in Table 3. Since our initial survey, public satisfaction with the way that democracy works in Nigeria has plummeted, from 84 percent in 2000 to merely 35 percent in the wake of the 2003 elections. Dissatisfaction with democratic performance has mounted, and now tops 60 percent. *Clearly, most Nigerians do not feel they have reaped a "democracy dividend," and the public is discouraged by the course of national life over the past four years.*

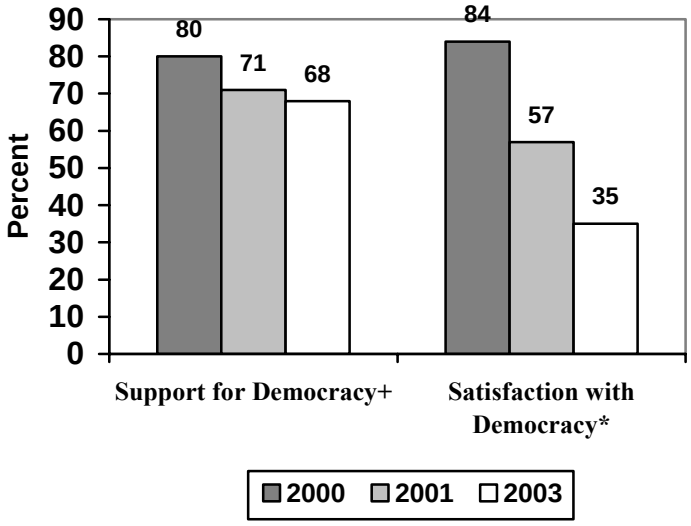
Table 3: Satisfaction with Democracy (%)

"Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Nigeria?"	2000	2001	**2003**
Fairly/very satisfied	84	57	**35**
Not at all/not very satisfied	14	41	**61**

Nonetheless, Nigerians evidently distinguish between current performance and the nature of the political system. This is best illustrated by comparing the two indicators in Figure 1. Satisfaction with democracy

has dropped steeply, yet support for democracy appears to have stabilized. The proportion of Nigerians who prefer democracy as a system has remained roughly constant since 2001. We will explore this theme in more detail below.

Figure 1: Support for Democracy and Satisfaction with Democracy



+ % agreeing that "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government"
** % who are relatively satisfied with "the way democracy works in Nigeria"*

A Disillusioned Public

Public disapproval of government performance is widespread and acute. In Table 4, we compare public assessments of the government's handling of key policies and national problems. Approval ratings for government performance have dramatically fallen nearly across the board and in many important areas (including jobs, inflation, inequality, and food security) fewer than a quarter of all Nigerians endorse the government's efforts. Public disapproval has sharply intensified with regard to jobs, crime, health and education. Only in the areas of HIV/AIDS and overall health services are approval ratings near fifty percent.

Table 4: Government Policy Performance

% saying government is handling problems fairly/very well	*2000*	*2001*	**2003**
Managing the economy	n/a	55	**32**
Creating jobs	54	47	**23**
Price stability/inflation	58	26	**16**
Narrowing gaps between rich & poor	39	26	**14**
Reducing crime	61	57	**38**
Improving health services	63	62	**48**
Addressing education needs	60	61	**38**
Delivering household water	n/a	43	**31**
Food security (everyone has enough to eat)	54	30	**22**
Fighting corruption	64	48	**26**
Resolving conflicts between communities	n/a	61	**44**
Combating HIV/AIDS	n/a	65	**53**

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters?"

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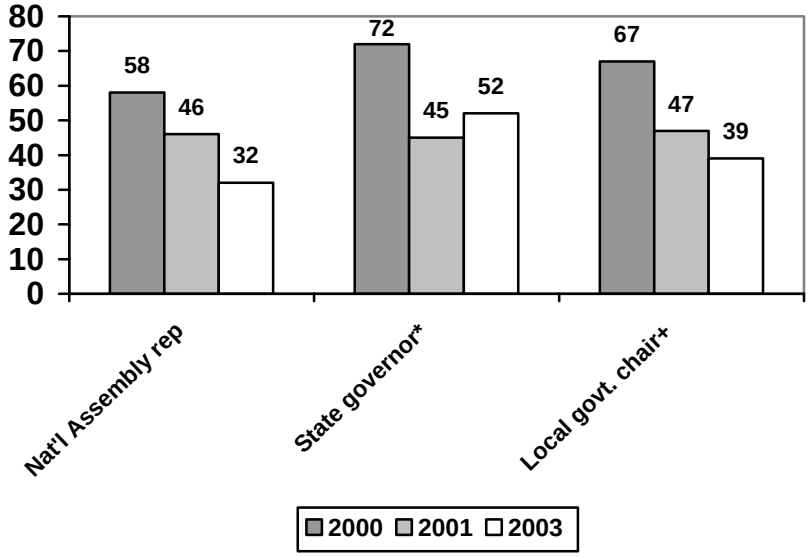
Not surprisingly, frustration over the government's policies and programs is matched by lower approval for public officials. In Figure 2, we illustrate approval ratings for key elected leaders. A minority the Nigerians interviewed for the 2003 survey approve the performance of their National Assembly representative or Local Government chair, while about half express approval for their state governor, down substantially from the levels expressed in 2000.

Figure 2: Performance of Elected Representatives
("Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months?")
% Approve/Strongly approve



**State representative [2001]; +LG Councilor [2001]*

Nor has the presidency escaped these generally negative public assessments, as seen in Table 5. Shortly after his reelection for a second term, President Obasanjo garnered a 39 percent approval rating – a drop of more than thirty percent from 2001. While a majority of the public still expresses some degree of trust for the President, only 3 percent affirm the highest level of trust. Among all the measures tracked by these attitude surveys, presidential approval ratings are among the most volatile, and they can change on a monthly (or even weekly) basis. Nonetheless, it is clear that the President had to contend with reduced public confidence as he entered a second term of office.

Table 5: Views of President Obasanjo (%)

	2000	2001	***2003***
Approve/Strongly approve performance	n/a	72	**39**
Trust president *(A little bit/A lot/ A very great deal)*	90	82	**58**
(of which: trust "A very great deal")	30	15	**3**

Not surprisingly, poor assessments of performance have fostered lower public trust for many other public institutions and officials. Table 6, which compares expressions of trust from the last two surveys, shows a marked decline in trust for leading democratic institutions. Indeed, levels of trust have dropped by about

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twenty points in most instances, and barely half of Nigerians express some level of trust for the legislature, local governments, or political parties. Fewer than half trust INEC or the police.

In one significant instance, trust appears to have increased since 2001: 55 percent currently express some trust in the military, a nine percent increase since 2001. (Of these people, 20 percent now express high levels of trust, compared with 14 percent in 2001) Of course, some of these people may trust the military on a general basis (including any political action it might take), while others might be expressing increased confidence that the military is staying *outside* of politics and maintaining a professional role.[8] The lowered opposition to military rule (observed below) tends to favor the former interpretation, i.e. that Nigerians have reduced their general suspicion of the military.

Table 6: Trust in Institutions/Leaders
("How much do you trust each of the following?")

% trust a little bit/a lot/a very great deal	2001	**2003**
National Assembly	67	**51**
Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	66	**46**
State Government*	76	***44* (62)***
Local Government	72	**55**
Ruling party (PDP)	71	**51**
Opposition parties (any)	60	**52**
Military/army	46	**55**
Police	41	**41**

**"State Government" was divided in 2003 among State Assembly and (State Governor)*

Elections and Legitimacy
Nigerians' views of the Independent National Electoral Commission are among the lowest levels of institutional trust reported in the latest survey, conducted a few months after the 2003 elections. Clearly, these controversial elections, which were widely criticized by domestic and international observers, have damaged citizens' confidence in democratic performance. In Table 7, we compare evaluations of the two elections since the transfer to civil rule.

Table 7: Evaluation of Elections
("In your opinion, were the following elections conducted honestly or dishonestly?")

% saying elections were conducted fairly/very honestly)	Jan. 2000	**Oct. 2003**
Presidential	72	**40**
National Assembly	n/a	**42**
State Elections	76	**44**

In 2000, nearly three-fourths of Nigerians believed the transitional elections were conducted relatively honestly. In 2003, only one in four people expressed confidence in the conduct of elections. Moreover, there is substantial variation among regions and groups in views of the elections. In parts of the country where the most serious irregularities were reported – the South-South and Southeastern states – as few as one in ten citizens believed that the 2003 elections were honest (see Section V below).

It is clear that perceptions of the elections are associated with assessments of democracy, as seen in Table 8. Those who viewed the 2003 presidential elections as relatively honest showed much higher levels of satisfaction with democracy, while those who regarded the elections as dishonest were much less satisfied. Indeed, about forty percentage points separate the two groups. By comparison, the two groups

(perceiving honest vs. dishonest elections) are ten points apart in their relative preference for democracy as a system.[9] *We conclude from this that the administration of elections forms an important criterion of democratic performance for many citizens, and the conduct of elections has an important influence on public assessments of democratic development.*

Table 8: Views of 2003 Elections and Attitudes Toward Democracy *(percent)*

	View of presidential elections	
Views on democracy:	***Very honest***	***Very dishonest***
Satisfied with democracy	59	18
Dissatisfied w/ democracy	40	77
Support democracy	70	60

Extent of and Patience with Democracy

As we might expect, reduced satisfaction with democratic performance is reflected in somewhat more critical views of the quality of Nigeria's democracy, displayed in Table 9. Since the transition to civil rule, Nigerians have shown considerable realism in assessing the country's system as a "democracy with major problems," a view that gained some ground in the 2003 survey. Respondents are less likely to see the system as a "democracy with minor problems" and more likely to regard it as "not a democracy" at all. Indeed, at this lower margin, the proportion of Nigerians who are thoroughly discouraged with political reform has nearly tripled since 2001.

Table 9: Extent of Democracy

% agreeing with each	2000	2001	**2003**
Full Democracy	17	10	**7**
Democracy with Minor Problems	33	37	**25**
Democracy with Major Problems	46	46	**52**
Not a Democracy	1	5	**13**

"*In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Nigeria today?"*

The latest survey reveals considerable political frustration among the Nigerian public. As Table 10 shows, patience with the system's ability to deal with national problems has worn thin, while a substantially larger proportion of Nigerians are willing to consider alternatives to the present system. Here, the change over time is impressive. While political patience dropped modestly from 2000 to 2001, attitudes have shifted more than a dozen points in 2003, as fewer than six in ten Nigerians express patience with current conditions, and nearly four in ten might look to alternative political arrangements.

Table 10: Patience with Democracy

% agreeing with each	2000	2001	**2003**
"Our present system of elected government should be given more time to deal with inherited problems"	79	71	**58**
"If our present system cannot produce results soon, we should try another form of government"	17	24	**38**

Note: Residual responses not listed; not all columns total 100 percent.

Conditional Support for Democracy

Does this political frustration and disillusionment encourage Nigerians to think about non-democratic political alternatives? Is the public coming to favor non-democratic solutions to the nation's problems?

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As in previous surveys, we asked Nigerians to consider political options that would be contrary to pluralist democracy – a consolidation of one-party government, the emergence of a presidential "strongman" who could not be removed by elections or term limits, a reversion to military rule, or a system akin to the era before colonialism, when chiefs, elders or other traditional rulers held power. The results are seen in Table 11:

Table 11: Non-Democratic Alternatives

% who disapprove/strongly disapprove	2000	2001	**2003**
One-party rule	88	78	**80**
Presidential "strongman"	83	71	**72**
Military rule	90	81	**69**
Rule by chiefs/elders	n/a	61	**61**

"There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?"

While resistance to one-party rule or strongman rule has slipped since 2000, we see that public opposition is still fairly consistent to these sources of "creeping authoritarianism." Disapproval of military rule, however, continues to wane, as seven in ten Nigerians in the latest survey oppose this option. This is still a substantial majority, but these shifting attitudes reflect a worrisome trend from the perspective of democratic development and stability. Reduced opposition to the idea of military rule is echoed by expressions of increased public trust in the military, and by lower levels of rejection of "non-democratic" government. Nigerians in their majority remain 'democrats', but a growing minority are willing to consider alternatives to civilian electoral rule.

In addition, we observe that more Nigerians are willing to consider *some* form of non-democratic rule: when we group together the main non-democratic alternatives (one-party rule, strongman, military rule), the proportion of citizens who reject *all three* options has declined from 76 percent in early 2000, to 58 percent in mid-2001 and 51 percent in September 2003. In other words, in the months immediately following the transition to civil rule, three-quarters of Nigerians firmly opposed all conceivable challenges to pluralist democracy. Currently, only half of the nation's citizens are willing to reject all non-democratic options.

Democratic Practices

Nigerians are evidently less satisfied with the performance of democratic government and more equivocal toward the democratic system. Is the public's diminished enthusiasm also reflected in their basic views of the practices and values of democracy? Here we consider important political rights and civil liberties including elections, party pluralism, presidential power, and freedom of speech. With respect to elections (Table 12), we observe little change in preferences for competitive elections and party competition. More than a third now believe that fewer political parties would be preferable to many parties, although here too, the change is minimal and most seek a wider range of political choice. The increased caution about party competition is at least partly related to concerns over political turmoil. Seven of ten respondents believe that party competition often fuels conflict, a significant increase from our previous survey.

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Table 12: Views on Elections and Parties

% who Agree/Agree strongly with each statement	2001	**2003**
"We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections."	85	**82**
"Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders"	13	**17**
Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Nigeria	31	**37**
Many political parties are needed to make sure that Nigerians have real choices in who governs them	63	**59**
"In this country, how often does party competition lead to conflict?" *(% saying often/always)*	61	**70**

Note: Figures omit residual responses and do not total 100 percent.

Although Nigerians are somewhat more equivocal about party competition, this does not necessarily mean that they would prefer a dominant party or an excessively strong executive. As noted above, the public consistently rejects one-party rule, and trust for the ruling party has declined (along with trust in parties generally). Furthermore, Nigerians substantially reject "strongman" rule and are increasingly concerned to limit presidential power. In Table 13, the 2003 survey shows that the public increasingly prefers legislative power to rest with the National Assembly, rather than allowing the president to take the lead in passing laws. Moreover, there is firmer insistence on term limits for the presidency. While this was not a controversial issue in Nigeria prior to 2005 (in contrast to earlier controversies in Namibia, Zambia or Malawi), it suggests that the public has been cautious about the executive overstepping the prerogatives of office. Indeed, a majority of Nigerians now express concern about presidential disregard for the constitution. This could be a reflection of such events as the growing dispute over the disposition of Shari' a law, the contentious electoral law, the 2002 impeachment controversy, or the 2003 elections.

Table 13: Views on Presidential Power

% who agree/strongly agree with each statement	2001	**2003**
"The members of the National Assembly represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree"	66	**77**
"Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the National Assembly thinks"	20	**16**
"In Nigeria, the President must obey the law, including the constitution, for example by serving no more than two terms in office"	80	**86**
"The President of Nigeria should be able to serve as many terms in office as he wishes"	15	**12**
"In this country, how often does the President ignore the Constitution?" (% saying often/always)	*23*	***56***

Note: Figures omit residual responses and do not total 100 percent.

Turning to the question of free speech, Table 14 indicates that Nigerians have altered little in their attitudes toward tolerance and free expression: about half are inclined to accept differences of opinion, while a slightly lesser proportion would prefer consensus. However, there is a very substantial shift in the public's perceptions of the condition of civil and political rights in Nigeria. In 2001, nine of ten Nigerians

expressed little or no concern about their freedom of expression. Yet in the 2003 survey, only about a third are relatively comfortable in speaking their minds, and 58 percent believe they frequently have to be 'careful about what you say'.

While Nigerians clearly perceive that their freedom of expression has been eroded, the sources of these restrictions are less clear. It is possible that government policies or actions – whether federal, state, or local authorities – may intimidate citizens. This can take the form of legal restrictions, police or military actions, or other steps to intimidate or suppress public expression. Alternatively, the presence of private vigilantes, militant organizations, or political partisans can also constrain free speech. Some of these elements are not directly linked to government. It is generally evident that high levels of social conflict, and the acrimonious election season, have had chilling effects on political expression. One thing is clear: a majority of citizens in this traditionally vibrant society now feel inhibited about political expression, a discouraging trend in a fledgling democracy.

Table 14: Freedom of Speech

	2001	**2003**
"In order to make decisions in our community, we should talk until everyone agrees" (% agree)	44	**46**
"Since we will never agree on everything, we must learn to accept differences of opinion within our community" (% agree)	52	**52**
How often do people have to be careful about what they say about politics? *(% answering rarely/never)*	89	**37**

Note: Figures omit residual responses and do not total 100 percent

The findings about freedom of expression are part of a more general trend in which Nigerians are less enthusiastic about the quality of rights and liberties in the current regime. Figure 3 below tracks the following question over time: When comparing "our present system of government with the former system of military rule," are the following things currently better, worse, or the same? In the first two surveys, a large majority of citizens felt that freedom of speech, association, and electoral choice were greatly improved over the period of military rule. In 2003, the comparison was not nearly so favorable: about six in ten Nigerians still feel that freedom of speech and electoral choice are better than during the military era, and two-thirds say that freedom of association is better. But these levels of approval are significantly lower than they were only two years earlier. This waning endorsement of the benefits of democracy may partly reflect the ebbing memory of military rule, particularly the last regimes. However, it also suggests that the state of civil liberties and political rights has fallen short of Nigerians' expectations for a democratic regime.

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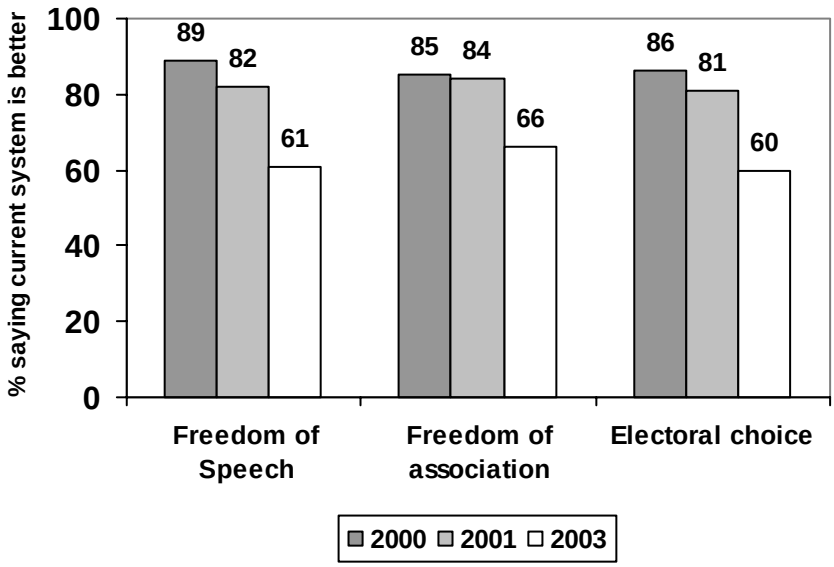
Figure 3: Assessments of Political Liberties
(Current system compared with military rule)



Even as Nigerians appear less secure in their political rights and liberties, these political values seem to be increasingly important as a gauge of democracy. Asked whether democracy is valuable mainly for political voice and representation, or for meeting basic economic needs (Table 15), Nigerians are more inclined to stress political than economic gains as the most important feature of a democratic system. This suggests that public perceptions of the declining quality of rights and liberties contribute to the increasingly critical views of democratic performance.

Table 15: Worth of Democracy

% agreeing with each statement	2001	**2003**
Democracy is worth having because it allows everyone a free and equal voice in making decisions	52	**55**
Democracy is only worth having if it addresses everyone's basic economic needs	43	**41**

Note: Figures omit residual responses and do not total 100 percent.

Political Participation and Engagement

Having discussed Nigerians' views of democracy and the performance of government, we now turn to issues of political participation and engagement. What does the survey tell us about Nigerians' interest in politics, their participation in political life, and their perceptions about the role of average citizens in the nation's evolving democracy? We might imagine that the political dissatisfaction expressed by Nigerians would induce political apathy, or possibly motivate citizens to engage in more contentious actions to express their concerns. The survey offers some basis for gauging trends in political behavior.

In the previous Afrobarometer report, we noted that political interest grew substantially after the transition to civil rule, as the political restrictions of military rule were lifted and citizens re-entered civic life. The initial 2000 survey showed that about two-thirds of Nigerians expressed an interest in politics or engaged in political discussion; eighteen months later, eight out of ten people said they were engaged by political affairs. In the latest survey (Table 16), political engagement appears to have stabilized at these

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levels. The proportion of Nigerians who express active interest in politics has not declined significantly (essentially within the margin of error). Nigerians remain interested in public life.

Table 16: Interest in Public Affairs

	2000	2001	**2003**
Discuss politics *(% within previous year)*	67	79	**76**
Interest in public affairs *(% with some interest)*	64	85	**82**

This perception is confirmed when we look at the actual participation of citizens in various aspects of civic affairs. As seen in Table 17, the results for 2003 are essentially the same as the results from the preceding survey. There are relatively consistent levels of attending meetings, discussing public issues, attending demonstrations and even committing political violence.

Clearly, Nigerians are more ready to engage in contentious politics than they were under military rule (as seen from the figure on demonstrations), though it is notable that reported levels of violence have not increased. Nonetheless, since the survey relies on s*elf-reported* behavior, it is likely that violence is under-counted, and the level of seven percent is a troubling signal of the continued potential for turmoil.

Table 17: Political Participation (% during previous year)

	2000	2001	**2003**
Attended community meeting	45	52	57
Got together with others to raise an issue	54	52	51
Attended demonstration or protest march	7	15	16
Used force or violence for a political cause	n/a	6	7

Note: Because figures do not include all responses, they do not total 100 percent.

Self-reported voter participation has also increased. Fully 85 percent of those in the latest survey said they had registered to vote in the 2003 elections, and their reported rates of participation were higher than for the 1999 elections. Indeed, self-reported voter participation is significantly above the officially reported levels, which we provide for comparison in Table 18.

Table 18: Self-Reported Voter Participation
(Compared with official estimates)

	2000	**2003**
Registered to Vote? (% yes)	78	**85**
Voted Recent Presidential election? % eligible voters answering 'yes': *(officially reported participation):*	67 (52)	**73 (69)**
Voted Recent National Assembly election? % eligible voters answering 'yes': *(officially reported participation):*	57 (41)	**68 (49)**

This calls for explanation. One possibility is that Nigerians are tempted to exaggerate their voting participation because they see it as a desirable activity. This is a pattern often seen elsewhere in surveys conducted well after an election has concluded. For various reasons, memory about elections is selective, and often biased by knowledge of the outcome. Alternatively, it is possible that people are accurately reporting their participation, in which case the data sheds some light on the validity of official estimates of voter turnout. If the official voters' rolls were dramatically inflated (as some have alleged), then

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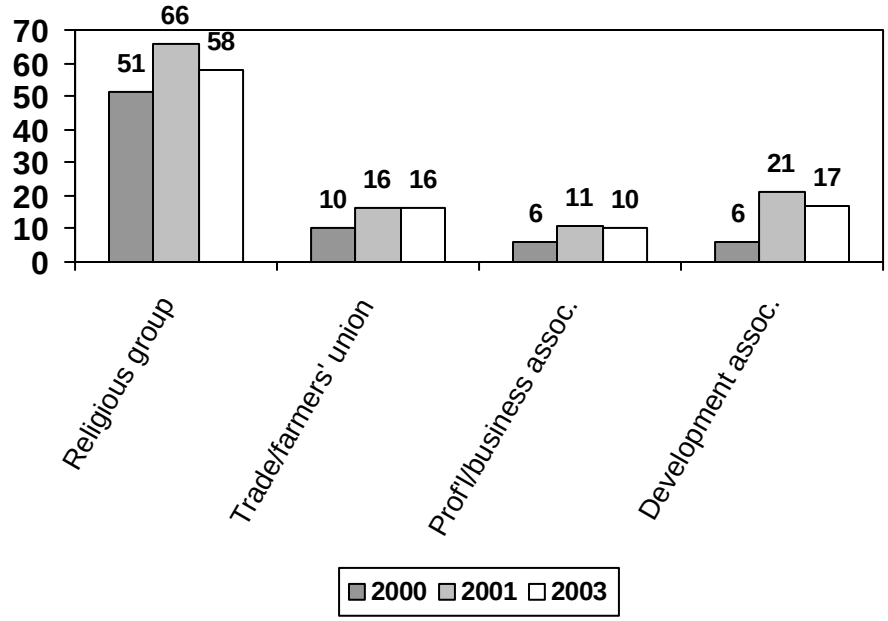
official turnout would effectively be under-reported. By providing a random sample of reported voter participation, the survey may provide a more precise estimate of turnout in the most recent elections.

Apart from voting and general political interest, membership in various civic and cultural associations remains high. Nine out of ten Nigerians report membership in some type of organization, topped by religious affiliations, which are 84 percent in the most recent survey. If we adopt a more stringent definition of membership, counting only those who identify themselves as "active" members or leaders of associations, as seen in Figure 4, we find that membership remains steady, at levels higher than those of four years earlier. Nearly six of ten Nigerians are active in their religious institutions, while notable (though smaller) groups are engaged in unions, professional or business associations, and development organizations. Indeed, participation in the leading "civic" (as opposed to religious or communal) associations has roughly doubled since the transition to democratic rule.

Figure 4: Civic Membership
(% claiming active membership in each)



The degree to which citizens feel that they can meaningfully participate in political life and influence public affairs – commonly referred to as *political efficacy* – is essential to our portrait of political engagement. The survey has regularly tracked Nigerians' views on several questions related to political effectiveness, including levels of political understanding, the ability to discuss politics, confidence in the possibility of reaching politicians, and a belief that average citizens can have political influence. The results are displayed in Table 19.

The 2003 survey suggests that Nigerians are ambivalent about their political efficacy. On most questions, there is a clear perception that average citizens have less access to political life. Somewhat more people feel that they cannot understand the complexities of public affairs, and fewer people believe that their friends and neighbors listen to their political views. Furthermore, a declining proportion of Nigerians feel that the political influence of average citizens has improved since the military era. Indeed, this has dropped steeply from two-thirds in 2000 to just 40 percent currently. Only a minority of Nigerians believe they now have more political voice than they did under the military. This downward trend echoes the lowered assessments of civil liberties.

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At the same time, a majority of Nigerians (62 percent) believe they have the potential to work with others to raise political issues and make politicians listen. Although much of the public is discouraged about their actual political influence, they remain hopeful that the system can potentially accommodate public participation.

Table 19: Political Efficacy

	2000	2001	**2003**
'Politics and government are too difficult to understand' *(% agree)* *(% disagree)*	68 27	68 15	**74** **14**
Friends and neighbors listen to your political views *(% who believe this)*	20	44	**36**
If you had to, you could get together with others to make elected representatives listen to your concerns *(% agree)*	49	55	**62**
Ordinary people can influence government *(% saying better now than under military rule)*	66	60	**41**

Yet this optimism about the possibilities of representation is offset by deep skepticism about the interests and concerns of politicians. As seen in Table 20, only about one in ten Nigerians believe that their elected leaders look after their interests or listen to their concerns. The wide gap between the public and politicians, observed in the previous survey, has persisted.

Table 20: Views of Elected Leaders

	2001	**2003**
How much of the time do you think elected leaders try their best: To look after the interests of people like you? *(% saying often/always):*	12	**11**
To listen to what people like you have to say? *(% saying often/always):*	10	**12**

The general alienation from elected officials, and indeed most government officials, is vividly illustrated in Table 21, where we consider the "representation strategies" of Nigerians – how average people seek to meet their needs and interests. Among the list of possible individuals to whom people might take their concerns, political figures do not appear until fifth in the list. Nigerians are more likely to discuss problems with a religious figure, a traditional ruler, someone in their local development association or a community notable, rather than any elected leader or public official. Indeed, the most common "political" interaction is with political party officials. While we do not have a basis for assessing this over time, we suggest that the high level of interaction with political party officials reported in the 2003 survey reflects the intensive political activities of the election season.

Apart from party representatives, a small minority of Nigerians have contacted a variety of elected figures or public officials. Contact appears to decrease with distance: relatively more citizens contact their local governments, administrators, or state governor's office (as well as non-governmental organizations), while merely 6 percent have contacted their National Assembly representatives. The distance between elected leaders and the voting public is another troublesome sign of popular disaffection. This may create substantial impediments to democratic legitimacy and the effectiveness of emerging democratic institutions.

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Table 21: Representation Strategies
(% of people who have contacted these in the previous year)

	2000	2001	**2003**
Religious leader	49	51	**51**
Traditional ruler	18	29	**33**
Official of village/town development association	n/a	n/a	**29**
Influential person	49	34	**26**
Political party official	n/a	n/a	**21**
Local government councilor	12	17	**17**
Non-governmental/community organization	n/a	n/a	**16**
Government official	13	12	**14**
State governor's office	n/a	n/a	**9**
National assembly representative	2	5	**6**

Nigeria's Democratic Fragility

In the 2001 Afrobarometer survey, we concluded that Nigerians had come "down to earth" from the initial euphoria and high expectations of the transition to civil rule. Citizens were more critical of their government and much less positive in assessing the state of politics and the country in general. The public was coming to terms with the depth of the nation's problems, and the realities of managing contentious political and economic change. Yet they still expressed strong commitments to the regime of democracy and most of its essential values. The public widely rejected the idea of military rule or other political measures that might restrict political rights, liberties or competition.

The 2003 survey measured Nigerians' attitudes at the end of the first civilian term, and in the wake of critical second elections. The survey reveals mixed trends in public views toward democracy, the qualities of the political system, and the legitimacy of the democratic regime. It is evident that Nigerians are increasingly disillusioned by the course of politics and public life. A substantial majority do not feel that they have reaped any sort of dividend from the nation's fledgling democracy. Citizens have low estimates of democratic performance, declining trust in their leaders and central democratic institutions, and substantially negative assessments of the performance of the current government. Many people are frustrated, and public patience is strained.

In addition, the staunch popular opposition to authoritarian rule evident immediately after the transition has subsided, along with commitments to some democratic values and practices. In particular, given Nigeria's history, we note that citizens have somewhat lessened their aversion to the idea of military rule, and are increasingly inclined to trust the armed forces. Furthermore, the proportion of Nigerians who would reject all of the most likely alternatives to pluralist democracy (including one-party rule; a presidential strongman *a la* Venezuela or Zimbabwe; or military rule) has diminished from three-fourths to about half. To some degree these views reflect a sense that there is little to lose, since many Nigerians do not feel that the current government has adequately dealt with the nation's serious issues, and a significant number do not believe that their essential liberties or political influence have substantially improved under the current regime.

The findings that the Nigerian public is discouraged by the course of politics and increasingly skeptical about the experiment with democracy will come as little surprise to many observers of current affairs. The more difficult question is how these changes in public attitudes affect the stability and resilience of the democratic system. As we have noted elsewhere, the previous failures of democratic government in Nigeria were shadowed by an evident loss of popular support, and indeed the military was often invited to step in by some influential segments of society.

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Does the current situation indicate a similar crisis of legitimacy? On this point, we resist the conclusion that either democratic disillusionment or authoritarian nostalgia are at critical levels. Some analysts suggest that the distribution of attitudes is quite worrisome for the consolidation of democracy. Larry Diamond, for instance, asserts that democratic approval ratings below 70 percent, and authoritarian endorsements above 20 percent, signal an essential weakness in the democratic system. While noting this benchmark, we would also caution that democratic development is an uneven process that reflects the particular history, values, and circumstances of individual countries. Viewed from the perspective of Nigeria's history and recent experience, the current trends in public attitudes certainly indicate the fragility of the political process and the potential obstacles to further development of democracy, but they do not necessarily presage the collapse of the system.

A substantial majority of Nigerians adhere to some core notion of democratic government, along with many essential values and commitments that sustain democratic rule. There is widespread preference for restraints on presidential power and adherence to the constitution, acceptance of freedom of speech and political tolerance, preference for a plural party system, and rejection of political violence. Many Nigerians are members of civic associations and participate actively in community affairs. Moreover, despite evident frustration over limits to political voice and influence, many average Nigerians remain interested in politics and hopeful that they can engage meaningfully in politics. The public has not retreated into cynicism or sullen quiescence. Voter participation also appears to be high, though voters are quite skeptical about the honesty of recent elections.

On balance, Nigerians retain a marked desire for democracy, weak sentiments for a return of authoritarian rule, and commitments to civic participation, pluralism, and restraints on executive power. This suggests a reservoir of democratic values and behavior that can be a source of resilience in a period of political and economic frustration. The 2003 survey demonstrates the fragility of Nigerian democracy while also indicating sources of strength and possibilities for democratic revitalization.

III. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ECONOMY

The Nigerian economy, badly undermined under previous military regimes, has not substantially recovered in recent years. Despite buoyant oil prices, economic growth has been sluggish and the economy remains afflicted by low employment, high rates of poverty, and inadequate delivery of essential goods and services. Apart from notable improvements in telecommunications, critical infrastructure such as electricity and fuel supply remain deficient. There is meager private investment outside the petroleum sector, and debt obligations continue to accumulate. Here as in so many other areas, the expected dividends of democracy have not materialized for most of the Nigerian public.

Table 22 indicates that Nigerians continue to place a high priority on economic issues, which consistently lead the concerns identified by survey respondents. In 2003, fuel crisis and corruption moved nearer the top of the list, but unemployment and poverty remain the dominant problems, at similar percentages to the preceding survey. In Chapter II we suggested that Nigerians judge the regime of democracy more by the delivery of political benefits than by economic standards. It is equally clear, however, that Nigerians are urgently concerned with the economy, and consequently economic conditions will influence satisfaction with democracy as well as assessments of government performance.

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Table 22: Leading National Issues Identified by Nigerians
(% ranking each issue first)

2001		**2003**	
Issue	%	*Issue*	**%**
Unemployment	39	**Unemployment**	**32**
Poverty	14	**Poverty**	**13**
Food Shortage	9	**Petrol/fuel crisis**	**8**
Management of the economy	6	**Management of the economy**	**6**
Education	5	**Education**	**5**
Agriculture/farming	4	**Corruption***	**5**

**Virtually equal to previous item.*

Economic Satisfaction

Table 23 displays measures of satisfaction with the nation's economy. Nigerians are evidently discouraged by economic performance and the course of the economy in recent years. General satisfaction with current economic conditions increased slightly after 2000, only to drop substantially in the latest survey. Less than a third of Nigerians in 2003 viewed the country's economic conditions as good, and only slightly more would say there has been improvement within the past year. As we have seen, rankings of the government's economic management are equally low. In 2001, about half those interviewed gave positive ratings in each these areas.

Table 23: Satisfaction with Nigeria's Economic Conditions

	2000	2001	**2003**
Country's economic condition *(% good)*	45	48	**31**
Current economic conditions compared w/ 12 months ago *(% saying better now)*	n/a	47	**35**
Expected condition 12 months from now *(% saying better)*	n/a	79	**61**
Government's management of the economy *(% approve)*	n/a	55	**32**

Furthermore, citizens express less optimism about the possibility of future improvements. Six in ten Nigerians expect a better economy within the following year, but this is down by twenty percentage points from the previous survey. As hopes remain unfulfilled, many Nigerians have obviously reduced their expectations for economic revitalization.

The sources of frustration become clearer when we consider various aspects of the economy over time. As seen in Table 24, we asked Nigerians to compare current conditions with the circumstances they observed a few years ago. In 2001, nearly half of those we interviewed perceived improvements in the availability of goods, property rights and overall standards of living when compared to the military era – though assessments of employment and inequality were less positive. In 2003, only a limited minority of Nigerians see improvements in any of these areas, including very low assessments of jobs and income gaps. These figures vividly illustrate the perception that a democracy dividend has eluded the country.

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Table 24: Economic Circumstances: Past v. Present
(% saying better now than a few years ago)

	2001	**2003**
Availability of goods	46	**33**
Security of property from government seizure	46	**27**
People's standard of living	43	**26**
Job opportunities	37	**19**
Gap between rich and poor	24	**14**

Note: Because not all responses are included, figures do not total 100 percent.

Views on Markets and Economic Reform

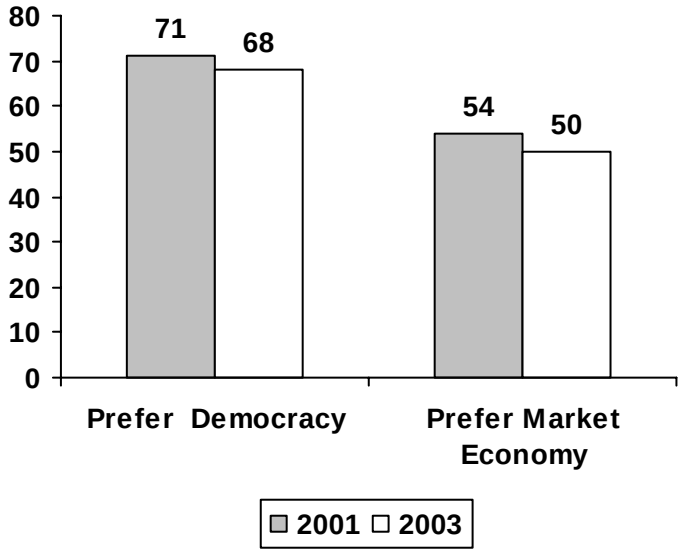
Previously, we looked at the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and preferences for democracy, asking whether political dissatisfaction was related to underlying preferences for the political regime. Here, too, we want to inquire whether economic dissatisfaction is related to changes in attitudes toward the form of the economy, or the economic "regime." Three observations are crucial: First, while Nigerians have a relatively strong political consensus over the regime of democracy, they are much more ambivalent over the form of the economy. While a plurality of Nigerians clearly prefers a market-led economy, a substantial portion of the public would favor more state intervention, or even a state-controlled economy.

Second, market values do not always cluster together in the same way that democratic values do. Those committed to political democracy tend to support such values as freedom of speech, competitive and fair elections, accountability, etc. In the economic realm, however, many Nigerians embrace some aspects of a market economy (for instance, private property rights and individual initiative) while also leaning toward a strong government role in ensuring welfare and regulating some markets. The range of economic views appears more varied and wide-ranging than in the political realm.

Third, we do not observe large shifts in most economic attitudes, apart from declining economic satisfaction. Nigerians appear fairly consistent in their views on the preferred form of the economy, as well as key values and economic policies. There are incremental shifts in preferences for some economic policies, and a considerable swing in economic patience, but in many areas we see remarkably little change in views.

Figure 5 illustrates our first point. While about seven in ten Nigerians express a preference for democratic government, only about half clearly prefer a market economy. Preferences for both democracy and markets have ebbed slightly since 2001, but these underlying attitudes appear resilient.

Figure 5: Preferences for Democracy and Markets
(% who prefer each)



Looking more closely at public views on the preferred form of the economy, we see continued ambivalence. As seen in Table 25, the proportion of Nigerians who lean toward a government-run economy has increased from about a quarter to a third, while a slightly reduced majority appear to prefer that individuals make production and market decisions. Yet the apparent inclination toward a more state-led economy is offset by other views. Half of Nigerians continue to prefer a market economy, and a minority would prefer that government plans production and market decisions.

Table 25: Views on Form of the Economy
(% who agree with each view)

	2001	**2003**
Prefer market economy	54	**50**
Prefer government-run economy	27	**33**
Economic system doesn't matter	16	**13**
Views on alternatives: *"The government plans the production and distribution of all goods and services"*	43	**40**
"Individuals decide for themselves what to produce and what to buy and sell"	65	**60**

Another way of charting these attitudes is to track the association between political and economic liberalism. To what extent do democratic preferences correspond to market preferences? Table 26 updates the two-by-two grid we constructed in the previous survey. The upper-left quadrant shows the proportion of "market democrats" who clearly prefer both democracy and markets. In the current survey, this group has declined to a plurality of 40 percent. But the departures have not been in a consistent direction: there has been a small rise among 'democrats' who do not favor markets, and an equal rise among those who favor markets but not democracy. While "market democrats" are more prevalent than any other group, they are rivaled by "non-market democrats," alongside significant

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minorities who reflect other views. One tendency – those who prefer neither democracy nor markets – shows virtually no change. This table reinforces the impression that Nigeria's democratically-minded public is divided on preferences about the economy.

Table 26: Association of Democratic and Market Preferences, 2003
(*responses for 2001 in parentheses*)

%	*Prefer democracy*	*Don't prefer democracy*
Prefer market economy	**40** (46) "Market democrats"	**13** (10) "Non-democratic marketeers"
Don't prefer market economy	**30** (27) "Non-market democrats"	**18** (17) "Non-democratic, non-marketeers"

Moving from general preferences to particular views about government and markets, Table 27 gives a perspective on several questions relating to entrepreneurship, inequality, the framework of markets, and economic decision-making. A typical "neo-liberal" perspective might include a preference for individual initiative; relatively greater tolerance for disparities of wealth; a clear emphasis on private markets; and acceptance of a role for economic policy professionals. Alternatively a "populist" view would emphasize the welfare role of the state; the need for government-insured equity; public regulation of important markets; and a reduced role for experts, in favor of popular input and consultation in economic affairs. These models of economic opinion are general composites that may be used to gauge the character and direction of real attitudes.

Table 27: The Role of Government and Markets

(% agreeing with each statement)	2001	**2003**
"People should look after themselves and be responsible for their own success in life"	39	**43**
"The government should bear the main responsibility for the well-being of people"	58	**56**
"It is alright to have differences in wealth, because those who work hard deserve to be rewarded"	37	**40**
"We should avoid large gaps between the rich and the poor because they create jealousy and conflict"	58	**58**
"It is better for private traders to handle agricultural marketing, even if some farmers get left out"	45	**43**
"It is better for government to buy and sell crops, even if some farmers are served late"	48	**50**
Economic scenarios: *(% approving each)*		
"Economic experts (including foreign donors and investors) make the most important decisions about our economy"	44	**36**
"It is better to have wealthy people as leaders because they can help provide for the community"	45	**44**

Note: Because not all responses are included, figures do not total 100 percent.

What does the survey portray? As we noted above, there has been very little change in attitudes about the contours of the economy. Most opinions have shifted only a few points, often within our two-percent

margin of error. Furthermore, these opinions do not cluster around either a purely "neo-liberal" or "populist" view. Rather, Nigerians have mixed views about economic life. A majority emphasizes the government's welfare role rather than stressing individual self reliance, and the public similarly prefers a more equitable economy rather than an unequal, entrepreneurial system. The margin of Nigerians who would prefer state control of agricultural markets has perhaps widened. All these views suggest a "paternalist nostalgia" as Nigerians look to the days when the government played a more active role in managing markets and providing for public needs.

At the same time, the continued acceptance of personal responsibility and entrepreneurship indicate substantial inclinations toward a market-led system. Nigerians have not diminished their belief in the importance of community-based redistribution from wealthy citizens. They have somewhat reduced their confidence in economic experts, from 44 to 36 percent. This may reflect dissatisfaction with the quality of economic officials and advisors in the first four years of civilian rule, as well as criticism of external institutions and donors.

Turning to specific views on economic reform in Table 28, many attitudes are consistent with the preceding survey, although there is evidence of increased popular bias against the government's approach to reform. About seven in ten Nigerians believe that the government's economic policies have generally been harmful and have only benefited a few. This majority view has remained stable since 2001. There is, however, a substantial decline in the proportion satisfied with efforts to reduce the government's role in the economy. While half of Nigerians were willing to endorse this direction in the preceding survey, about a third currently do so. With regard to specific policies, there remains staunch opposition to civil service cutbacks, an increased preference for trade protection, and slightly reduced acceptance of school fees – although two-thirds still place priority on raising educational standards, including potential fees.

Table 28: Views on Economic Reform

(% agreeing with each statement or view)	*2000*	*2001*	**2003**
'Government's economic policies have hurt most people and only benefited a few'	60	72	**73**
Satisfied with government policy to reduce role in the economy	n/a	51	**34**
'All civil servants should keep their jobs, even if paying salaries is costly to the country'	72	83	**80**
Favor importing affordable goods from other countries	n/a	36	**35**
Favor protecting domestic producers through tariffs	n/a	56	**61**
'Better to have free schooling, even if the quality of education is low'	26	30	**33**
'Better to raise educational standards, even with school fees'	69	67	**64**

Public patience for reform (or at least its current version) is inconsistent, as seen in Table 29. In the early months of the new civilian government, the public was almost evenly divided among those who wanted to abandon current reform efforts, and those who were inclined to be patient for results. By 2001, popular sentiment shifted dramatically in the direction of patience: about two-thirds of Nigerians accepted that current hardships were needed for economic improvements. In the 2003 survey, forbearance appears to be wearing thin. A little more than half of citizens are waiting to see if economic reform will work, while four in ten would like to see government policies scrapped. In the wake of the first presidential term, popular frustration over poor performance and the government's economic management clearly diminished tolerance for a challenging reform agenda.

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Table 29: Patience with Economic Reform

	2000	*2001*	**2003**
The costs of reforming the economy are too high; Government should abandon its policies	49	27	**40**
In order for the economy to get better, it is necessary to accept hardships now	45	65	**53**

Personal Circumstances and Economic Welfare

What of the personal economic conditions of average Nigerians? How do they perceive their own circumstances, and what does the survey tell us about the actual livelihoods of the people? In Table 30 we track Nigerians' views of their own their economic situation. The 2003 survey reveals that assessments of current personal circumstances have turned decidedly negative: in the first two surveys, about six out of ten people had a positive view of their present condition, while fewer than half are positive in this survey. Moreover, evaluations of relative conditions have turned more negative. Only 46 percent believe their circumstances have improved over the previous year, compared with 68 percent in 2000. Nigerians remain decidedly optimistic about the future, as nearly three-fourths expect their conditions to improve over the next year; yet this figure is down by a dozen points from the initial survey.

Table 30: Personal Economic Circumstances

	2000	*2001*	**2003**
Current personal economic circumstances *(% good)*	58	61	**46**
Personal circumstances 12 months ago *(% better now)*	68	56	**46**
Expected circumstances in 12 months *(% better in future)*	86	79	**74**

Another way to measure subjective welfare is to ask people where they stand in the general scale of wealth and poverty (Table 31). These assessments have remained fairly consistent. When presented with a subjective scale where 1 = poorest Nigerians, and 10 = richest Nigerians, the average person places themselves just slightly below the middle (4.81), with the score declining slightly since 2001. Furthermore, Nigerians continue to perceive declining standards over time, ranking their parents 10 years ago significantly higher than themselves today. Since the end of the petroleum boom in the early 1980s, economic hardships and austerity have eroded living standards for most Nigerians, and this is reflected in this pessimistic assessment of personal circumstances over time.

Table 31: Subjective Views of Living Standards Over Time
(Scale: 1=poor, 10=rich)

(Individual's mean score)	2001	**2003**
Self today	4.93	**4.81**
Parents 10 years ago	5.29	**5.19**
Children's future prospects	9.14	**9.06**

The Nigerian penchant for optimism, however, is clear in projections about their children's' prospects: the average score of 9.06, very near the top of the scale, is almost double where the average person ranks themselves. Regardless of their generally discouraging assessments of economic performance, many Nigerians continue to hope that the next generation will have much better circumstances

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After considering subjective assessments of personal welfare, we turn now to some objective indicators of economic conditions. The Afrobarometer gathers data that can provide a general picture of individual and household conditions, as well as changes over time. Several items are summarized in Table 32. The first pertains to household finances – whether people break even, save some money, or draw down savings and borrow in order to meet their annual expenses. There has been very little change in this measure over the past four years. About seven in ten Nigerians currently meet their annual expenses through their income (reflecting a barely significant decline since 2000), and among this group, nearly four in ten say they can save money, a figure nearly double that of the first survey.

In the 2001 and 2003 surveys, 20 percent of Nigerian adults report that they are unemployed and actively looking for work. This is one standard measure of unemployment, though many economists and social analysts object that this leaves out "discouraged" workers, who for various reasons may have stopped looking for work. In the 2003 survey, a total of 57 percent are not currently employed. Even though this includes a substantial percentage of people not actively in the labor market – including students, housewives and the elderly – it also suggests a high level of joblessness that has not diminished in recent years.

Table 32: Indicators of Economic Welfare

	2000	2001	**2003**
Personal financial condition *(% who break even/save money)*	73	71	**69**
(of which: % save money)	21	37	**38**
Unemployment *(% without job, actively looking)*	n/a	20	**20**
(total % currently without job)	n/a	58	**57**
Shortages of goods and services *(% reporting shortages often/always)*			
Food	n/a	27	**27**
Clean water	n/a	52	**49**
Medicines/health care	n/a	46	**39**
Cash income	n/a	46	**48**

Another way of measuring personal and household welfare is to look at deficiencies of essential goods or resources, shown in the lower portion of Table 33. Here too, we see relatively consistent levels of deprivation, with somewhat more than a quarter of Nigerians reporting regular shortages of food, and about half experiencing shortages of clean water and income. Shortages of medicines or treatment, although still widespread, appear to have abated somewhat during the past two years, as about four in ten now report some deficiencies of health care. Nigerians continue to suffer deficiencies in major aspects of economic well-being.

How do people cope with these economic needs? Some of the answers are suggested in Table 33, where we look at the sources of assistance Nigerians turn to when faced with shortages. In most areas, people rely most often on support from kin, hardly a surprising finding in a country where extended families play such important social and economic roles. When people have critical needs for cash or food, they are more likely to turn to family than any other source of assistance. Community assistance is the second most common outlet for help, when people can get it. Where there is a shortage of water, it is common to turn to community resources, and to a lesser degree, government outlets. In many cases (11 percent in the case of food shortages, 19 percent in the case of water), Nigerians have no recourse at all, and must simply endure the shortages.

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Table 33: Assistance Strategies
(3 highest percentages are shown for each)

	Type of shortage:			
Sources of assistance:	*Food*	*Clean Water*	*Medicine*	*Cash Income*
Kin	22		14	37
Community	6	20	12	9
Market				
Government		11		
Illicit				
No-one	11	19	13	18

We can also outline *subsistence strategies*, or the ways in which people provide for their livelihoods (Table 34). Little more than a third of Nigerians rely on a formal salary, while more than half derive some income from buying and selling goods, and nearly half have borrow from kin or friends. Very few people turn to banks for loans. Almost four in ten Nigerians, however, rely to some extent on income from family members working elsewhere in the country, and 17 percent report some reliance on money from abroad, whether in Africa or overseas. Furthermore, the widespread importance of public employment is evident, as 37 percent of households report some reliance on a government wage-earner.

The responses below are not exclusive – many people have more than one source of income, and the responses provide only a general sense of how people meet their needs. Indeed, the range of responses suggests diversified subsistence strategies that rely on extended family and other social ties and utilize a mixture of formal and informal strategies for obtaining income. This question deserves further elaboration in subsequent reports.

Table 34: Subsistence Strategies

% of people with some reliance on the following sources of income:	
Salary	36
Buying & selling goods	55
Borrowing from family/friends	47
Borrowing from banks	8
Money from family working elsewhere	39
Money from family in other countries	17
Government salary in household	37

Economic and Political Satisfaction

Finally, we want to consider how economic assessments correspond to relative satisfaction with democracy. As Table 35 shows, the effects are strong, and have changed noticeably in recent years. For those who believe the country's economic condition is relatively good, satisfaction with "the way democracy works in Nigeria" is substantially greater than for those with a negative view of the economy, and the gap has grown since 2001. Satisfaction with democracy has diminished regardless of economic view, but 61 percent of those with a positive view currently approve democratic performance – an approval level well above the national average of 35 percent, and forty points above those with an adverse view of the economy, who give only a 22 percent democratic satisfaction rating.

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Table 35: Economic Evaluations and Satisfaction with Democracy

		% Satisfied with democracy	
View of economic conditions		2001	**2003**
Country's economy	*Good*	74	**61**
	Bad	42	**22**
Personal living conditions	*Good*	67	**49**
	Bad	42	**19**

A similar pattern is evident with regard to personal living conditions. Even for those who believe their personal circumstances are relatively good, satisfaction for democracy has dipped below fifty percent; but it has fallen even more steeply for those with poor assessments of their own current conditions. Only two in ten Nigerians who are unhappy with their economic circumstances profess to being satisfied with democracy, which puts this group well below the national standard of 35 percent. As seen in the previous section, Nigerians are somewhat more inclined to value political traits rather than economic performance when evaluating democracy. Yet, as this analysis makes clear, economic conditions significantly influence levels of democratic satisfaction.

Crosscurrents of Reform

The 2003 Afrobarometer depicts widespread discontent with the performance and direction of the Nigerian economy, reflecting the difficult economic conditions experienced by most Nigerians and their dissatisfaction with government policies. While the public has reflected consistent views on many aspects of economic life in recent years, their assessments of the economy have clearly declined, they are less likely to compare current conditions favorably with earlier conditions, and they show reduced (though still considerable) optimism about future improvements. Nigerians in the main are democrats, though not market liberals. There is considerable support for the ideals of a welfare state that will reduce inequality and provide for essential needs. Many citizens also endorse aspects of state intervention, including a large civil service, trade protection, and government management of agricultural markets. There is growing skepticism about the benefits of economic liberalization, suggesting that potential reformers face an imposing task in shaping popular opinion to greet change. The task may be aided by the fact that Nigerians reflect many values that harmonize with a market economy, including a belief in individual initiative and the benefits of entrepreneurship, commitment to private property rights, and acceptance of a reduced government role in some areas. Economic stagnation and hardship clearly influence negative assessments of democratic performance, though it is not evident that economic concerns drive attitudes toward democracy. While many Nigerians weigh economic performance heavily when assessing the government in office, they are more likely to stress political rather than economic factors in their evaluations of the democratic system.

IV. IDENTITY, SECURITY, AND THE RULE OF LAW

Identity and Political Attitudes

"Identity" broadly refers to personal affinities with social, political or economic groupings. There are objective and subjective dimensions of identity. Objectively, citizens may be members of ethno-linguistic, religious, occupational, or gender groups. There can also be a subjective perception of group membership, with a sense of obligation and loyalty that may compel action and behavior. People often have multiple identities, and if these identities are cross-cutting, their exclusive tendencies are minimized.

Nigeria's large population is quite heterogeneous.[10] Strong ethnic and religious cleavages have frequently resulted in negative identity politics. Ethnicity and religious identity have been politicized, with

worsening problems of instability and conflict evident during the past two decades.[11] The transformation of identities as a political weapon has been explained by several factors: The patrimonial and *rentier* character of the Nigerian state arising from the oil boom accentuates communal competition for central resources. The country's long experience with military rule, and its associated repression and injustices, has also intensified communal grievances. Furthermore, protracted economic and political crises have created general deficits in government legitimacy, which often encourages a reliance on group solidarities.[12]

Some observers argue that pluralism constitute an obstacle to nation-building and the development of democratic institutions and processes.[13] Many also argue that a widely shared national identity is a precondition for democracy.[14] In countries with deep social divisions such as Nigeria, there is a need for policies and programs that will integrate diverse groups without attempting to obliterate multilayered group identities.

People maintain membership in different groups. They may accord different priorities to various identities at various times, and they will frequently describe themselves in terms of the identity that they currently consider most important. Thus, the existence of multiple identities is not in itself a problem, except when sectarian identities are given primacy over national identities by a significant segment of the population, which often happens when identities are politicized.

As a baseline for understanding identity in Nigeria, respondents were asked: "Besides being a Nigerian, which specific group do you feel you belong to first and foremost."[15] The 2003 Afrobarometer survey finds that self-identification in terms of ethnicity and religion is most common among Nigerians (Table 36).

Table 36: Self-Identity, Other Than Being a Nigerian

Identities	**2001**	**2003**
Ethnic and linguistic	28	48
Religion	21	19
Occupation	28	12
Class	14	4
Gender	4	3

Note: Residual responses omitted; figures do not total 100 percent.

In the 2003 survey, many more Nigerians identified themselves in terms of ethnicity than in 2001. While this displays increasing ethnic consciousness among Nigerians, it could be a transitory expression, especially in light of controversies and grievances surrounding the 2003 elections.

Are Nigerians coming to emphasize group identities over national identity? This is not confirmed by survey data, which shows that Nigerians are equally divided in terms of their preferences for national or group identity. In the 2001 survey, about half of those interviewed adhered to either group identities or a national identity.[16] In 2003 these self-proclaimed identities (Nigerian and communal group) were also identical, at 46 percent each.

While the percentage of respondents attached to the Nigerian identity is relatively low, it is stable across the two surveys. Comparative data on a broad range of identities in fourteen other African countries (covered by the Afrobarometer in 2003) is presented in Table 37. The data show that Nigeria and Lesotho ranked highest on ethnic identity, followed by Ghana, Mali and Senegal.

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If we consider both ethnic and religious identities as a blended "communal" identity, then Nigeria is third among this group of African countries, with 67 percent of citizens professing strong communal identities. Senegal leads with 77 percent, followed by Ghana (69 percent), and Nigeria is closely trailed by Lesotho (61 percent) and Mali (60 percent). These widespread communal solidarities can be juxtaposed to national identity. Ghana and Senegal are notable for their low levels of national identity, while national affinities in Mali and Lesotho are comparatively higher than in Nigeria.

It is interesting to note that weak national identities (and strong communal allegiances) do not necessarily correlate with social conflict. While Nigeria has had a great deal of communal conflict in recent years, other countries such as Ghana, Lesotho, or Mali, with a comparable distribution of identities, have not been nearly so unstable.

Table 37: Comparative African Data on Identities

Country	Ethnicity	Religion	Occupation	Class	Gender	National identity*
Cape Verde	1	7	14	11	3	68
South Africa	10	6	29	13	6	29
Zambia	10	18	29	14	2	31
Malawi	14	8	38	20	4	49
Kenya	14	6	39	6	2	45
Mozambique	14	4	18	2	2	69
Tanzania	17	7	35	2	2	63
Namibia	18	3	16	7	29	30
Uganda	19	8	52	6	6	46
Botswana	27	8	6	6	2	26
Senegal	32	45	12	6	1	37
Mali	36	24	32	3	3	67
Ghana	37	32	19	2	3	26
Nigeria	**48**	**19**	**17****	**4**	**3**	**42**
Lesotho	49	12	13	10	<1	57

**The percentages here refer to those who chose national identity as opposed to group identity as well as those who did not respond to the question.*

*** Combines occupation and student identities.*

"Ethnic entrepreneurs" who politically mobilize ethnic feelings are a common catalyst of communal tension. Such figures often exploit real or alleged injustices, in an effort to secure material or political advantages from the government. In this regard, do Nigerians feel that the economic conditions of their identity group are better or worse than others? As seen in Table 38, there has been only a modest shift in perceptions: In 2001, 29 percent of respondents felt that their own identity groups were economically worse or much worse than other groups, increasing only to 36 percent in 2003. These figures suggest that perceptions of "relative deprivation" are noteworthy though not acute, and have not intensified dramatically in recent years.

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Table 38: Economic Condition of Own Identity Group Relative to Other Groups

Economic condition of respondent's identity group (%)	2001	**2003**
Much better	6	5
Better	33	24
About the same	32	27
Worse	23	23
Much worse	6	13

Note: Residual categories not listed. Figures may not total 100 percent.

Equality is a fundamental element of democratic governance, and citizens' perceptions of equity or unfairness influence the legitimacy of democratic regimes, institutions and processes. Nigerians were asked how often their identity groups were treated unfairly by the government. In this survey, the perceived sense of injustice has apparently grown: while12 percent of all respondents in 2001 said they were "always" treated unfairly, this response increased to 22 percent in the 2003 survey. Again, we speculate that the contentious elections of 2003 may have exacerbated the sense of injustice among many groups.

As shown in Table 39, the sense of unjust treatment varies among identity groups. Those who profess mainly economic identities (i.e. class or occupational) are most likely to feel aggrieved, followed by ethnically-identified groups. On the whole, those who profess a religious identity are much less likely to feel that the government treats them unfairly.

Table 39: Perceptions of Group Treatment by Government, 2003

(%)	*Identity*		
How often respondent's identity group treated unfairly by government?	Ethnic	Religious	Economic*
Never	15	27	8
Sometimes	36	43	40
Often	20	18	26
Always	29	12	27

**Economic identity is a composite of self-reported class and occupational identities*

In Table 40 we consider a range of economic and political views reflecting variations among identity groups. The data indicate that identity and political attitudes are related. For instance, Nigerians who describe themselves in ethnic terms, or in terms of economic identity, are more critical of economic and political conditions than those who profess a mainly religious identity.

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Table 40: Identity, Economic and Political Attitudes

(%)	***Identities***		
Economic and Political Attitudes	Ethnic	Religious	Economic*
Assessment of country's economic condition			
• Fairly bad/very bad	68	49	63
• Fairly good/very good	25	40	29
Assessment of your own living conditions			
• Fairly bad/Very bad	46	27	41
• Fairly good/Very good	39	56	44
Preference for Democracy (% agree)			
• "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government"	68	78	69
• "In some circumstances, a non-democratic government may be acceptable"	20	11	21
Satisfaction with " the way democracy works in Nigeria"			
• Not at all/Not very satisfied	68	57	69
• Satisfied/Very satisfied	32	43	31
"Our constitution expresses the values and hopes of the Nigerian People"			
• Agree/strongly agree	59	63	58
• Disagree/strongly disagree	28	22	22
Nigeria should be united or broken apart for the sake of peace?			
• Nigeria should remain united as one country[17]	75	86	86
• Nigeria should be broken apart	25	14	14

**Economic identity is a combination of those who identified themselves in terms of occupation, class and student.*

Many analysts have suggested that Nigerians show greater allegiance to their ethnic or primordial identity groups than to the nation. For instance, one of the explanations as to why corruption persists in the economic and political life of the country is that citizens do not consider it improper to fraudulently appropriate national resources in order to improve the conditions of their sectional group.[18] As we have seen in Table 37 above, Nigeria ranks high among African countries in the percentage of citizens who identify with sub-national identities in preference to national identity. The more important issue is the influence of identity preference and attachment on economic and political attitudes.

The data presented in Table 41 below shows that those who feel more attached to group identity (of any sort) differ significantly in their political and economic attitudes from those who adhere to a national identity. Citizens with group identities assess economic condition more negatively, have a lower preference for democracy, are less satisfied with the way democracy works in the country, feel that their identity group is often or always treated unfairly, and are more likely to support the dissolution of the country to resolve conflicts among groups. On one question – the legitimacy of the national Constitution – there is little difference in views among different group or national identities.

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Table 41: National and Group Identities and Political Attitudes

(%)	***National vs. Group Identities***	
Economic and Political Attitudes	National	Group
*Assessment of country's economic condition**		
• Very bad/Fairly bad	56	69
• Very good/Fairly good	35	24
Preference for democracy		
• Democracy is preferable to any kind of government	73	65
• In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable	17	22
Satisfaction with "the way democracy works"		
• Not satisfied	59	72
• Satisfied	41	28
*Constitution expresses the values and hopes of the Nigerian People**		
• Disagree/Strongly disagree	21	30
• Agree/Strongly agree	61	58
How often respondent's identity group treated unfairly by government?		
• Never/Sometimes	58	49
• Often/Always	42	51
Nigeria should remain united, or be broken apart for the sake of peace?		
• Nigeria should remain united as one country	86	76
• Nigeria should be broken apart	14	24

Note: The question stated: "Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a Nigerian and being ----- [Respondent's preferred identity group]. Which of these two groups do you feel most strongly attached to"?
**Residual responses omitted; figures do not total 100 percent.*

Security, Corruption and the Rule of Law

Democracy cannot thrive in a society with vast corruption, a weak rule of law and widespread insecurity.[19] In recent years there has been continuing concern in Nigeria about corruption, conflict and insecurity. Since the 1999 transition to civil rule, the country has witnessed numerous ethnic, religious, communal and political conflicts in which thousands of people have been killed[20]. Violent ethno-religious conflicts have erupted in different parts of the country, where either protracted or frequent incidents have been recorded. Many analysts in the Nigerian press view the upsurge in ethnic and religious conflicts as a product of democratization, which affords people the opportunity to express their grievances. Others stress the legacy of military rule, and the suppressed grievances from the authoritarian era. Whatever the causes, such conflicts evidently have negative impacts on political and economic development.

In all Afrobarometer surveys, Nigerians have been asked how often violent conflicts occur between people within their family and their immediate community, as well as among different groups in the country. The responses for 2001 and 2003 survey rounds are presented in Table 42.

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Table 42: Perceptions of Violent Conflicts in Family, Community and Society

In your own experience, how often do violent conflicts arise between people? (%)		Never	Rarely/ Sometimes	Often/ Always
Within your own family	**2003**	**49**	**48**	**3**
	2001	48	49	3
Within the community where you live	**2003**	**30**	**58**	**12**
	2001	26	62	11
Between different groups in this country	**2003**	**12**	**54**	**33**
	2001	11	51	35

The responses are quite consistent between the two rounds of surveys. On the one hand, they suggest substantial levels of conflict. About half of all families experience some conflict, and seven out of ten people say conflict has erupted in their communities at least occasionally. Furthermore, nearly 90 percent of all Nigerians perceive conflict among different groups in the country, and a third believe this is a frequent occurrence.

There is a noticeable gap, however, between *acute* and *occasional* incidences of violent conflict. For instance, only 3 percent of Nigerians see their families as chronically violent, and 12 percent report regular conflicts in their own communities. People are far more likely to perceive frequent conflict in the nation at large, which is hardly surprising in view of the regular reports of violent incidents in the national (and sometimes foreign) media. Another finding, however, is that there has been no increase in reported or perceived conflict, despite the evident problems of tension and strife in the country.

The survey also seeks to identify different sources of conflict, the most prominent of which are presented in Table 43. In the 2001 survey, Nigerians identified religion, land and boundaries, and ethnicity as the most common sources of violent conflict. In the most recent survey, conducted just after the election season, political disputes gained importance as a source of violent conflicts. These shifts are easily explained by events in the nation. At the time of the earlier survey, controversy over *Shari'a* law sparked religious disputes in Kaduna and other localities, while land disputes in the Middle Belt and boundary conflicts in the Niger Delta were prominent. In the 2003 survey, these remained the leading sources of conflict cited by respondents, but political and party leadership disputes were increasingly important in this turbulent election year.

Table 43: Perceptions of Sources of Violent Conflict[21]

Sources of conflict (%)	2001	**2003**
Boundary and land dispute	27	**20**
Religion	26	**22**
Ethnic differences	13	**10**
Economic problems and social deprivation	7	**8**
Political and party leadership dispute	5	**14**
Natural resources	5	**2**

Only sources with highest responses are tabulated. Therefore, percentages do not total 100 percent.

The responses to this question indicate that violent conflicts are most often triggered by socio-cultural tensions (religion and ethnicity) and economic factors (land, natural resources, social deprivation). In view of the high incidence of violent conflicts in Nigeria, a salient issue is to identify the preferred

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institutions and agencies for the resolution and management of conflicts. Respondents were asked the question, "To whom would you turn for help to resolve a violent conflict between different groups in this country?" Several institutions and agents were identified, the most prominent of which are reported in Table 44.

Table 44: Institutions and Agencies for Conflict Resolution

Institutions and Agencies (%)	2001	**2003**
Traditional chiefs/elders/mediators	23	**15**
Armed forces and the police	16	**24**
Religious organization or leader	13	**7**
People involved in the conflict	12	**7**
Family/friends/neighbors	11	**5**
Other government agencies	5	**5**
Local administration	4	**2**
Divine intervention	2	**6**
Vigilantes	0.2	**2**
How well is the government handling conflict resolution? *(% saying fairly well/ well)*	61	**44**

There were notable changes between 2001 and 2003 regarding these avenues of conflict management. Compared to 2001, fewer people would turn to traditional chiefs and elders or to religious organizations and leaders. There is also a general decrease in confidence in community outlets such as friends and neighbors or parties to the conflict. Rather, more people would turn to the armed forces and police to resolve violent conflicts, indicating a move away from civil organizations to military and paramilitary agencies. Moreover, while only 2 percent say they would turn to vigilante groups, this is an apparent increase from the tiny proportion in the previous survey. Many of the recent cases of violent conflicts in the country have arisen from political, ethnic and religious disputes and involved the use of sophisticated weapons as well as active participation of the traditional rulers and religious leaders of the feuding groups, thereby making traditional methods of conflict resolutions either difficult to apply or less relevant. Some citizens simply despair of resolving these conflicts apart from divine intervention.

When discussing violent conflicts in Nigerian society, it is most pertinent to consider the extent to which citizens are disposed to use violence in resolving disputes. Respondents were asked whether or not they had used force or violence for a political cause during the past year. They were also asked how often they participated in protests or demonstrations. Responses over time are presented in Table 45.

Table 45: Self-Reported Participation in Violence and Protest

Action or Intention	*Used force or violence for a political cause (%)*		*Attended a protest or demonstration (%)*	
	2001	**2003**	2001	**2003**
Yes, several times/often	3	**3**	7	**8**
Yes, once or twice	3	**4**	7	**9**
No, but would do it if had the chance	11	**10**	21	**19**
No, would never do this	81	**82**	64	**64**

Note: Residual categories not included. Therefore not all items total 100 percent.

More than twice as many people reported that they participated in protest marches or demonstration than disclosed the use of force or violence for a political cause. We generally assume that people are reluctant to admit to political violence, and that this behavior is under-reported. Nonetheless, 7 percent reported

that they used force or violence during the year, while another 10 percent said would use force or violence for a political cause if they had the chance.

While the survey data does not indicate an increase in violent inclinations, it does suggest that a small but significant element of the citizenry is willing to advance their concerns through force, and underscores the need for more effective conflict resolution mechanisms. On occasion, the government has used the security agencies to frustrate non-violent protests aimed at expressing opposition to public polices or governmental actions, thereby creating conditions for 'violent struggles'. Examples of such instances include the punitive attacks on Odi (1999) and Zaki Biam (2000) communities during which the villages were ruined, people killed and property destroyed by soldiers.[22] The harassment and arrest of labor leaders, abuse of the judicial process to stifle labor union strikes, and general threats of repression against labor unions by the government, could escalate conflict and inciting more militant confrontation.

Closely related to the actual use of force or violence is the public attitude towards appropriateness of violence as an instrument of political competition and grievances. As shown in Table 46, a significant minority of the respondents said violence may sometimes be justified in Nigerian politics. Public sentiments against violence have strengthened in the past two years, no doubt in reaction to the strife and instability that has wracked the nation. Yet almost a quarter of citizens are still willing to consider violence as an instrument of politics.

Table 46: Perceptions of Political, Domestic and Vigilante Violence

Types of Violence	2000	2001	**2003**
Political Violence			
The use of violence is never justified in Nigerian politics *(% agree/agree very strongly)*	67	66	**73**
In this country, it is sometimes necessary to use violence in support of a just cause (*% agree/agree very strongly)*	26	28	**23**
Domestic Violence			
A married man has a right to beat his wife and children if they misbehave (*% agree/agree very strongly)*	n/a	25	**31**
No one has the right to use physical violence against anyone else (*% agree/agree very strongly)*	n/a	72	**67**
Vigilante Violence	n/a		
If you were a victim of violent crime, you would turn to the police (*% agree/agree very strongly)*	n/a	76	**81**
If you were the victim of a violent crime you would find a way to take revenge yourself (*% agree/agree very strongly)*	n/a	18	**16**

**The two statements under each headline were presented as a pair and respondents were asked to agree/agree strongly with one.*

More than a quarter of the respondents accept men beating their wives and children while about 1 in 6 Nigerians said they would take a personal revenge – a form of vigilantism – if a violent crime was committed against them. These responses indicate a substantial tolerance of violence in family relations and society.

Crime, Safety and Security

Violent crimes such as armed robbery, murder, and assassinations are widely reported throughout the country. In many cities and some rural areas this creates a high level of fear of crime. The inability of the police to effectively control violent crimes has led to the establishment of vigilante groups and community or neighborhood crime watch groups. There has also been an increase in the use of private

guards. The official crime statistics in the country lack reliability and validity for the purposes of determining accurate trend and pattern of violent criminal victimization.

One of the most reliable sources of information on criminal victimization is a representative survey in which respondents are asked whether or not they have been victims of crime (and what types of crime) within a specified period (usually a year). In the Afrobarometer surveys conducted in 2001 and 2003, respondents were asked questions relating to fear of crime and criminal victimization, the results of which are presented in Table 47.

Table 47: Perceptions of Crime, Safety and Security

Over the past year, how often (if ever) have you or anyone in your family:		*Never*	*Just once or twice*	*Several Times*	*Many times/ Always*
Feared crime in your own home?	**2003**	**61**	**22**	**13**	**4**
	2001	62	21	13	4
Had something stolen from your house?	**2003**	**65**	**22**	**10**	**3**
	2001	75	12	10	3
Been physically attacked?	**2003**	**80**	**13**	**5**	**2**
	2001	76	13	8	3

Note: Residual categories are omitted. Therefore, not all responses total 100 percent.

There has been virtually no change in self-reported victimization during the two survey rounds. Nearly two-fifths of the respondents feared being victimized in their homes at lease once during the year. More people reported that something was stolen from their house 2003 (35 percent) than in 2001 (25 percent). Overall, the annual victimization rates reported for property and personal crimes were very high.

The 2003 survey reveals much lower evaluations of government performance in handling crime, safety of persons, and security of property. Respondents were asked whether "safety from crime and violence" is worse or better under the present government compared to the previous military government. In the 2001 survey, 55 percent of respondents said safety from crime and violence was better or much better under the present government, while in the 2003 survey only 36 percent felt things were better now. In the 2003 survey, respondents were also asked if security of property was better or worse under the present administration compared to the preceding military regime. About a quarter (26 percent) said it was better/much better, as against 44 percent who said it was getting worse/much worse.

Corruption

Corruption is widespread and endemic in Nigeria. It is manifest in various ways including bribery, nepotism, favoritism, embezzlement, fraud, etc.[23] For four consecutive years beginning in 1998, Nigeria was classified as either the most corrupt or second most corrupt nation on the Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index.* One of the major policy goals of the present administration when it assumed office was to fight corruption. It enacted an anti-corruption law and established the Independent Corrupt Practices (and other related offences) Commission (ICPC) to enforce the law. Notwithstanding these efforts, more Nigerians perceive corruption in government offices and agencies in 2003 (Table 48). In addition, fewer people currently believe that government was fighting corruption fairly well or very well: in 2001, 48 percent of respondents said the government was fighting corruption fairly/very well, but in 2003 this percentage dropped to 24 percent. This implies that anti-corruption measures by the government are yet to make significant impact on the perception of citizens.

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Table 48: Perceptions of Corruption
(% of citizens who believe "most" or "all" of the following officials or figures are corrupt)

Officials and Occupations	2001	**2003**
Officials in the office of the President	34	**50**
Elected leaders	43	**54**
Government officials (e.g. civil servants)	44	**55**
Police	66	**70**
Border officials (e.g. Customs and Immigration)	52	**57**
Judges and Magistrates	34	**43**
Local businessmen	28	**37**
Foreign businessmen	31	**33**
Teachers and school administrators	23	**28**
Religious leaders	12	**18**
Traditional rulers	n/a	**28**
How well or badly is government fighting corruption? *(% fairly well/very well)*	48	**24**

These perceptions of corruption, which are obviously subjective, can be assessed against the actual incidence of bribes, which is one indicator of corruption. The survey provides data on the services which citizens offer bribes to procure. Between 7 percent and 16 percent of citizens report offering bribes to secure services from different government departments. There were no notable differences in the percentages of respondents who reported procuring services through bribery in 2001and 2003 (Table 49). Recalling our 2001 report, however, we found that a little more than half of all respondents reported paying a bribe at some time for some service; this overall incidence of corruption has clearly not diminished.

Table 49: Bribes for Services
(% who say they have to bribe a few times/often for these services)

Services	2001	**2003**
Get a document or permit	10	**10**
Get a child into school	11	**11**
Get a household service (like piped water, electricity, telephone)	12	**13**
Cross a border (Customs and Immigration posts)	5	**7**
Avoid a problem with the police (like passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest).	12	**16**

Rule of Law and Trust in Legal and Security Institutions

The doctrine of rule of law prescribes several attributes of law, most prominent of which are (a) equality of all citizens before the law; (b) non-arbitrary exercise of power; (c) exercise of governmental power based on pre-existing and well publicized constitution and laws; (d) stability or infrequent changes of law in order to facilitate compliance by citizens; (e) congruence between rules and their administration; (f) accessibility of courts to all citizens, and (g) independence of judiciary.[24] The overall goal of the doctrine is "to limit, and thereby to check, the arbitrary, oppressive and despotic tendencies of power and to ensure equal treatment and protection of all, irrespective of sex, class, status, religion and place of origin or political opinion."[25]

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The Afrobarometer includes several questions that can be used to assess public perceptions of the extent to which the rule of law is observed in the country. The responses are analyzed below in Table 50.

In Nigeria, the 1999 Constitution is the basis of all governmental powers and duties. A breach of its provisions constitutes a breach of the rule of law. Respondents were asked how often the President ignores the Constitution. Less than a quarter of the sample in the 2001 survey said he frequently ("often" or "always") breaches the constitution. But in the 2003 survey, 55 percent say he frequently ignores the constitution. Equality before the law is an important element of the rule of law doctrine. When asked how often people are treated unequally under the law, 50 percent in 2001 and 63 percent in 2003 said that citizens were "often" or "always" treated unequally. There is a marked popular perception that senior leaders do not fully respect the Constitution, and that citizens do not receive equitable treatment under law.

The supremacy of the Constitution, and the separation of power provisions in the constitutions of many democratic societies, are aimed at preventing despotism and arbitrariness. Nigeria's 1999 Constitution provides for the supremacy of the Constitution (Section 1); separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers (Sections 4-6) and fundamental human rights which include due process in criminal justice process, as well as rights to private property (Chapter 4: Sections 33-46).

Table 50: Support for the Rule of Law

Elements of the rule of law:	2001	**2003**
Separation and Balance of Power		
The members of the National Assembly represent the people. Therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree (*% agree/ very strongly agree)*	66	**77**
Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what National Assembly thinks. (*% saying agree/very strongly agree)*	20	**16**
Private Property Rights		
The government must abide by the law in acquiring any property, including paying the owners (*%agree/ very strongly agree)*	85	**89**
In order to develop the country, the government should have the power to seize property without compensation *(% agree /very strongly agree)*	12	**9**
Equality Under the Law		
Women have always been subject to traditional laws and customs, and should remain so (*% saying agree/very strongly agree)*	30	**29**
In our country, women should have equal rights and receive the same treatment as men do (*% saying agree/ very strongly agree)*	67	**70**

**The two statements under each headline were presented as a pair and respondents were asked to agree/strongly agree with one.*

One of the end-products of the observance of rule of law is the enhancement of the legitimacy of legal institution and governmental power generally. The present (1999) Nigerian Constitution was produced under the preceding military regime and lacked elements of public participation. Since its promulgation there have been calls in various sectors for review by a sovereign national conference, or a constitutional conference, or by the government (legislature) in accordance with the provisions for constitutional amendment.

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A critical question is: To what extent do citizens view the present constitution as legitimate? The same modest majority of 56 percent agreed in 2001 and 2003 that it represents the values and hopes of the people of Nigeria (Table 51). Currently, more than two-thirds of Nigerians agree that the courts have the rights to make binding judicial decisions, police can make people obey the law, and tax authorities can compel people to pay taxes. These percentages, however, have dropped moderately from the previous survey, possibly indicating some slippage in perceptions of authority for important institutions of law and order.

Table 51: Perceptions of the Constitution and Legitimacy of Judicial and Law Enforcement Agencies
(% agree/agree very strongly)

	2001	**2003**
Our Constitution expresses the values and hopes of the Nigerian people	56	**56**
The courts have the right to make decisions that people always have to abide by	72	**69**
The police always have the right to make people obey the law	75	**69**
The tax department always have the right to make people pay tax	73	**66**

The observance of the rule of law promotes trust in judicial, law enforcement and security agencies. Data on trust in judiciary, police and army are presented in Table 52. Trust in courts and police generally continues to decline while, as noted above, that of the army increased somewhat in the 2003 survey.

Table 52: Trust in Security and Law Enforcement Agencies

% with some degree of trust	2000	2001	**2003**
Law courts	75	74	**63**
Police	47	41	**39**
Army	60	46	**53**

Strong Identities, Less Security, Tenuous Rule of Law

These finding on identity, security and the rule of law reveal significant shifts during the early years of civilian rule. Various factors, including rising social conflict, communal mobilization in political parties, and a generally difficult economic situation, have contributed to stronger ethnic identities among Nigerians. Communal identities have a significant impact on attitudes toward politics and the economy, although there is a substantial difference among those who identify with religious identity and those who lean toward ethnic identity. There is evidence of a modest increase in feelings of relative deprivation among communal groups, though this shift is not dramatic.

The strong identification with communal identities leads naturally to questions about violence and conflict, in view of the high levels of communally-motivated conflict in Nigeria. Perceptions and reported levels of conflict are high in Nigeria, though these figures have not risen since the previous survey in 2001. In a turbulent election season, there is an understandable shift in the perceived sources of conflict, as Nigerians see political and party battles as increasingly linked to conflict in the country. Furthermore, citizens are more likely to turn to state security forces or even vigilantes to resolve violent conflicts, and relatively less likely to rely on elements of the communities or civil society. Self-reported political violence, though limited, is still quite significant, but it has not shown an increase over the past two years. Popular disapproval of political violence has increased, though acceptance of domestic violence and vigilantism has also grown slightly.

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The incidence of ordinary crime, as reported by Nigerians, has remained constant in recent years, and is holding at discouragingly high levels. Although the government has made many statements against corruption and has launched a number of anti-corruption initiatives, average Nigerians give the administration poor marks for its efforts, and there is a growing tendency to perceive corruption among public officials and institutions. Despite these perceptions, there has been no change in levels of bribery, which is but one indicator of actual corruption in the political and economic system.

In many areas, Nigerians support values conducive to the rule of law. They show strong affirmation of private property rights, and decisive majorities in favor of gender equality before the law, and restraints on arbitrary executive power. At the same time, there is modest confidence in the 1999 Constitution, and declining trust and confidence in major domestic institutions of law and order. While Nigerians accept many values and principles that are integral to a rule of law, they believe their political institutions are far from implementing a stable, effective and legitimate legal order.

V. THE VIEW FROM THE REGIONS

Regional Attitudes Toward Democracy

The diverse makeup of Nigeria's regions gives rise to many variations in outlook among the different sections of the country. As in previous surveys, we look beyond nationally-aggregated opinions to consider important differences in attitudes on key political and economic questions.

Regarding democracy, opinions vary substantially and have changed in different ways. Commitments to a democratic regime, displayed in Table 53, have declined sharply in most of the southern regions, while holding relatively steady (or even strengthening) in the northern parts of the country. In the South-South particularly, preference for democracy has seen a stunning drop of nearly 30 percentage points, while political apathy and acceptance of a non-democratic regime have each grown substantially. In the Southeast, where there has been a 22-point decline in preferences for democracy, some 28 percent of the people now say they might prefer a non-democratic government, the highest level of "democratic ambivalence" in the country. The North Central region is another area where affirmation for democracy is comparatively lower, and acceptance of a non-democratic option relatively higher.

These variations are not attributable to a single factor or explanation. Lagos has traditionally been an area of volatile opinions, and the episodic violence in the city, compounded by severe urban problems, may aggravate disillusionment with democracy. Following the 2002 explosion disaster at the Ikeja military cantonment, many Lagosians expressed their discontent with the government and a desire to see a stronger regime. The Southeast is clearly a disaffected region, and long-standing grievances among Igbos over political marginalization (especially in the wake of flawed elections, as seen below) may feed sentiments for authoritarian government. The North Central (Middle Belt) states have declined only slightly from initially moderate democratic preferences. Violence and communal tensions, however, may have further eroded confidence in the present system, as the earlier mood of apathy has evidently turned toward preferences for another type of regime.

We also note the unusual "concave" preferences in the Northwest, where democratic sentiments apparently declined and then rebounded. We speculate that the political successes of a regionally-popular party (the ANPP), the promise of a northern presidential candidate in 2007, and the expansion of *Shari'a* law in these states, may have bolstered public confidence in a democratic regime that appears to fulfill their interests and aspirations.

Table 53: Support for Democracy, by region (%)

	Democracy Preferred			*Non-democratic government preferred*			*Does not Matter*		
	2000	*2001*	**2003**	*2000*	*2001*	**2003**	*2000*	*2001*	**2003**
Lagos	81	72	**57**	8	12	**27**	11	16	**15**
Southwest	89	77	**75**	9	8	**15**	2	15	**9**
Southeast	87	89	**65**	6	8	**28**	6	3	**4**
South-South	87	77	**59**	3	8	**18**	9	12	**18**
Northwest	71	54	**77**	18	27	**11**	11	14	**11**
Northeast	81	71	**70**	9	12	**21**	10	16	**9**
North Central	67	69	**63**	11	21	**26**	22	8	**8**
Total	80	71	**68**	10	15	**20**	10	12	**11**

The interpretation of democratic preferences is substantially confirmed when we consider democratic satisfaction across regions, in Table 54. Satisfaction with democracy is extremely low in Lagos and the Southeast, where there are also relatively greater preferences for a non-democratic regime. There is low satisfaction in the South-South, although people in the Niger Delta region appear more inclined to be alienated (saying the political system 'does not matter') rather than to accept non-democratic options. In the Northwest, where preferences for democracy appear resurgent, we see that satisfaction with democracy is highest, having declined less severely than in any other region. The North Central region, where non-democratic sentiments are also substantial, has experienced an exceptionally large drop in satisfaction – 30 points, close to the decline of satisfaction in the Southeast and South-South.

Table 54: Satisfaction with Democracy, by Region
(% relatively satisfied "with the way democracy works in Nigeria")

	2000	**2001**	**2003**
Lagos	70	39	**17**
Southwest	92	46	**31**
Southeast	84	51	**12**
South-South	83	45	**14**
Northwest	86	70	**61**
Northeast	87	70	**54**
North Central	75	64	**34**
TOTAL	84	57	**35**

A more nuanced perspective on democracy is provided in Table 55, where views on the extent of democracy are broken down by region. Once again, the relative dissatisfaction of the southern states and the Middle Belt are highlighted, as citizens in these areas are relatively more likely to say that Nigeria is "not a democracy." The strongest sign of disaffection is found in the states of the Niger Delta, where a third of the population now says that Nigeria is not a democracy at all. In the northern states citizens are more inclined to view Nigerian democracy in the most positive terms or to accept that the country has "minor problems."

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Table 55: Evaluation of Democracy, by Region (%)

		Lagos	SW	SE	SS	NW	NE	NC	Total
Full Democracy	**2003**	**1**	**8**	**4**	**4**	**10**	**16**	**2**	**7**
	2001	1	6	8	7	15	14	11	10
	2000	10	16	18	10	24	20	19	17
Democracy, Minor Problems	**2003**	**20**	**26**	**22**	**13**	**39**	**26**	**21**	**25**
	2001	24	38	37	35	46	30	41	37
	2000	28	35	26	29	39	37	33	33
Democracy, Major Problems	**2003**	**64**	**53**	**50**	**45**	**46**	**51**	**64**	**52**
	2001	63	51	52	49	32	48	43	46
	2000	60	48	49	57	33	42	41	46
Not a Democracy	**2003**	**13**	**12**	**19**	**32**	**4**	**3**	**11**	**13**
	2001	13	5	3	5	2	4	3	5
	2000	2	0	1	1	2	1	2	1

These patterns are reflected also in patience for democracy, depicted in Table 56. About half of those in Lagos and the Southeast, and 44 percent in the South-South, now say they would be willing to think about another system if things don't get better soon. By contrast, the Southwest and the northern states are far more inclined toward patience, those in the Middle Belt moderately so.

Table 56: Patience with Democracy, by Region (%)

		Lagos	SW	SE	SS	NW	NE	NC	Total
Give system more time to deal w/ problems	**2003**	**43**	**72**	**51**	**39**	**65**	**68**	**61**	**58**
	2001	71	64	77	69	75	63	79	71
	2000	89	94	81	82	68	75	77	79
If no results, consider another system	**2003**	**51**	**27**	**44**	**51**	**31**	**31**	**35**	**38**
	2001	25	31	18	27	21	27	18	24
	2000	10	4	13	12	28	22	16	17

The distribution of attitudes toward democracy does not reflect a clear north-south divide, or even a consistent ethno-regional variation. The majority-Yoruba **southwestern** states, in particular, could be characterized as *disappointed democrats*: while citizens are not satisfied with the performance of democracy, and discouraged by the quality of the political system, they continue to adhere to a democratic ideal (above the national average), and they are mostly willing to stick with the system in the hopes of better results.

Across many of the **northern** states, citizens might be described as *contingent democrats*: by comparison with their southern neighbors, they are more content with political performance, less likely to be sharply critical of the system, and reasonably patient with the democratic regime. At the same time, their support for democracy is not adamant; indeed, a significant proportion is tolerant of non-democratic alternatives.

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The democratic deficit is most apparent in the troubled **Niger Delta** and **Middle Belt** states; the disaffected **Southeastern** states, which have long-standing grievances and are unhappy over the recent elections; and in **Lagos**, which suffers acute urban problems and communal tensions, and is also a center of dissent. Many of these citizens could be regarded as approaching a *tipping point* in democratic commitments. On a regional basis, these states are below the national average in preferences for democracy, quite discouraged about democratic performance (especially in the south), more critical of the character of democracy and relatively impatient about prospects for change. These citizens, if they continue to be disaffected, could eventually challenge the basic legitimacy of the democratic system. One catalyst of disaffection could be views of elections, as seen in Table 57.

Table 57: Evaluation of Elections, by Region

% saying previous elections were conducted fairly/very honestly	Jan. 2000	**Oct. 2003**	*Decline in approval*
Presidential			
Lagos	70	**44**	*-26*
Southwest	84	**57**	*-27*
Southeast	57	**10**	*-47*
South-South	71	**12**	*-59*
Northwest	76	**44**	*-32*
Northeast	91	**58**	*-33*
North Central	80	**53**	*-27*
TOTAL	72	**40**	*-32*
State Elections			
Lagos	79	**49**	*-30*
Southwest	88	**58**	*-30*
Southeast	55	**16**	*-39*
South-South	69	**10**	*-59*
Northwest	77	**56**	*-19*
Northeast	86	**61**	*-25*
North Central	81	**42**	*-39*
TOTAL	76	**44**	*-32*

The popular reactions to the 2003 elections are especially important for democratic legitimacy. If citizens cannot rely on the fairness and transparency of competitive elections, then a defining element of democracy is compromised or even missing. In Nigeria the average approval rating for elections (those who believed the previous elections were conducted relatively "honestly") fell by 32 percent in the latest Afrobarometer survey. In particular areas, there was an even sharper decline: approval of the presidential elections plummeted by 59 percent in the South-South and by 47 percent in the Southeast, both areas where domestic and international observers noted widespread irregularities.

For the state elections (the other elections for which we have a complete time series), approval of the elections fell by nearly 60 percent in the South-South, and by nearly 40 percent in the Southeast and North Central states. With almost nine out of ten citizens in the Niger Delta and the Igbo-majority states questioning the integrity of elections, it is clear that flaws in the electoral process have deeply aggrieved important segments of the country and alienated citizens from the democratic process.

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There is some correspondence between regional assessments of the 2003 elections and approval ratings for the President, as seen in Table 58. These views do not follow common perceptions about ethnic loyalty or even political partisanship. In September 2003 President Obasanjo's highest approval ratings were found in the northern states, where electoral support for the opposition ANPP is quite strong. A majority of those in the President's home region, the Southwest, actually disapprove of his performance, notwithstanding the apparent electoral support for the governing party in the last elections. In Lagos, a seat of the Yoruba-led AD opposition, approval for the President's performance is near the bottom of the spectrum, although citizens there were moderately critical of the last elections. In the Southeast and the South-South, severe post-election resentment converges with extremely low evaluations of the President, reinforcing our view of these regions as acutely disaffected.

Table 58: Presidential Approval, By Region

% who disapprove/approve the President's performance	*Disapprove*	*Approve*
Lagos	86	13
Southwest	64	36
Southeast	82	17
South-South	89	9
Northwest	33	63
Northeast	26	71
North Central	55	44
TOTAL	61	38

Note: Responses do not all total 100 percent.
"Don't know" and "No Answer" not shown.

Table 59 shows regional variations in attitudes toward various non-democratic political options. Overall, there has been no change in the levels at which people reject single-party rule or a presidential "strongman," but a notable decline in the rejection of military rule. This latter option is probably most significant in Nigeria, with along history of military rule but no real experience of single-party government or a civilian strongman.

On a regional basis, however, there are important variations. Lagos is most adamant in the rejection of one-party and strongman rule – indeed this is the only area where resistance to an overbearing executive has stiffened. At the same time, Lagos now lags in the rejection of military rule, as rejection of this option has dropped by 30 percentage points since 2001. The softening attitude toward an authoritarian regime is echoed in the Southeast and South-South, where rejection of military rule has declined by about 20 percentage points. The states of the Niger Delta were almost unanimous in rejecting military rule in 2000, yet in the latest survey this has declined to about two-thirds. By contrast, the Middle Belt shows only a slight decline in rejection of the armed forces, while rejection of military government has actually intensified in the Northwestern states.

How to account for these differences? Among many factors, security, electoral position, or economic conditions appear especially relevant. In Lagos, the Southeast, and the South-South, the combination of insecurity, perceived exclusion from the electoral process, and a weak economy may have made citizens more receptive to military rule or some other non-democratic political options. Some of the same factors may have affected attitudes in the Northeast, where rejection of military rule is now lowest in the country, at 60 percent. In the Northwest, it seems, the sense of political opportunity created by electoral gains may have strengthened democratic commitments and the corresponding opposition to a return of the military, which now leads the regions at 77 percent.

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Table 59: Non-Democratic Alternatives, by Region

% who reject each option		**Lagos**	**SW**	**SE**	**SS**	**NW**	**NE**	**NC**	**Total**
One-party Rule	**2003**	**95**	**75**	**82**	**75**	**84**	**71**	**79**	**80**
	2001	90	72	87	83	73	78	74	78
	2000	93	93	91	95	74	91	89	88
Presidential "strongman"	**2003**	**93**	**60**	**83**	**74**	**75**	**48**	**72**	**72**
	2001	78	66	79	75	71	49	77	71
	2000	93	83	93	95	66	83	81	83
Military rule	**2003**	**65**	**70**	**69**	**64**	**77**	**60**	**72**	**69**
	2001	95	83	88	85	69	77	79	81
	2000	94	98	96	98	73	91	89	90

With regard to other options, it appears that partisanship drives many attitudes. For instance, Lagos (a bastion of opposition sentiment in the Southwestern region), along with the Southeast and the Northwest (which fielded strong opposition candidates and parties in recent elections), strongly reject both a strong president and single-party dominance. By contrast, the states of the Southwest, which strongly supported the current government in recent elections, are more sanguine about presidentialism or party dominance. Citizens in the Northeast appear to be generally least resistant to the idea of non-democratic political options.

Regional Attitudes Toward the Economy

Turning to economic attitudes, the following tables display results for 2003, as the shifts in economic views have been far less significant than changes in political attitudes. As seen in Table 60, there is substantial divergence among different parts of the country in preferences over the type of economic system. The southwestern states are well above the national norm in preferring a market economy and steering away from a government-run economy. The Southwest is followed by the South-South and Lagos in the strength of general market orientation. The northern tier shows comparatively stronger preferences for a government-run economy, moderately so in the case of the Northwest, and more accentuated in the Northeast and the Middle Belt. The north is joined by the Southeast, where preferences for government and markets are nearly evenly divided.

Table 60: Preferred Type of Economy, by Region (%)

	Market economy preferred	*Government-run economy preferred*	*Does not matter*
Lagos	52	29	17
Southwest	69	20	9
Southeast	42	43	10
South-South	59	16	16
Northwest	46	37	14
Northeast	43	46	10
North Central	43	41	13
TOTAL	51	32	13

Note: Responses do not total 100 percent. "Don't know" and "No Answer" not shown

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As we have seen in the case of democratic attitudes, economic satisfaction does not neatly correspond to preferences for a particular system. Evaluations of the country's economic condition (Table 61) are most adverse in the Southeast, South-South, Lagos and the Middle Belt, in that order. Yet Lagosians and those in the Delta reflect a pro-market orientation, while citizens of the Southeast and the Middle Belt are more ambivalent, and many are inclined toward a government-run economy. People in different regions have a range of attitudes about the type of economic system that might best serve their interests. While some see opportunity in a market economy, others prefer a strong government hand as a path to economic security.

Table 61: Country's Economic Condition, by Region (%)

	Bad	*Good*
Lagos	78	18
Southwest	61	32
Southeast	82	13
South-South	81	14
Northwest	36	49
Northeast	31	57
North Central	71	24
TOTAL	62	30

Note: Responses do not total 100 percent.
"Don't know" and "No Answer" not shown

It is not surprising to find that assessments of economic conditions correspond with evaluations of government economic policies, in Table 62. The same areas that offer the most negative view of the economy – Lagos, the Southeast, the South-South, and North Central (Middle Belt) – also reflect the most critical views of the government's economic measures. In Lagos, 85 percent believe that few have benefited from official policies, and about eight in ten citizens in the Southeast, the Delta states and the Middle Belt concur with this view. Those in the Northeast are most inclined to perceive wider benefits from government policies, although even there, a majority believes that most people have been harmed by prevailing economic measures. In the Northwest and the Southwest, most citizens are critical of government policies, but considerable minorities believe that there have been broadly positive results.

Table 62: Views on Economic Reform, By Region
(% agreeing with each statement)

	Government economic policies have helped most, hurt a few	*Government economic policies have hurt most, helped only a few*
Lagos	14	85
Southwest	32	67
Southeast	16	82
South-South	13	81
Northwest	27	68
Northeast	42	55
North Central	20	79
TOTAL	23	74

Note: Responses do not total 100 percent. "Don't know" and "No Answer" not shown.

Another important variation is the relative patience for difficult economic reforms among the regions (Table 63). Despite their negative assessments of past policies, citizens in Lagos are most willing to accept current hardships in the hopes of future improvements. Those in the Northwestern, North Central

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and Southwestern states are also relatively patient. The South-South is ambivalent, with a plurality favoring patience but a substantial minority preferring that the government should abandon its policies. Patience is most strained in the Southeast and the Northeast, where clear majorities believe that the government should scrap its current programs.

Table 63: Patience with Reform, by Region
(% agreeing with each statement)

	Government should abandon its economic policies	*Accept hardships now in order for economy to improve*
Lagos	29	65
Southwest	42	55
Southeast	54	39
South-South	40	47
Northwest	31	61
Northeast	56	39
North Central	37	61
TOTAL	40	52

Note: Responses do not total 100 percent. "Don't know" and "No Answer" not shown.

Many of the findings from the 2003 Afrobarometer survey are frankly contrary to common images of regional orientations toward the economy. A number of commentators have suggested that southern regions, most especially the Southeast, are particularly entrepreneurial and market-minded, while those in the North leaned more toward a state-led economy that would reduce inequalities and compensate for disadvantages among the regions. Yet this image of a clear North-South economic divide is not affirmed by attitude surveys. It is true that citizens in the northern states are significantly less market-oriented than those in Lagos, the Southwest and the South-South. Those in the Northwest, however, differ from their Southeastern compatriots in their comparatively greater willingness to embrace a market economy and to reject a state-led economy. Furthermore, the public in the Northwest is quite similar to those in the Southwest – and relatively distant from those in the Southeast – in believing that government reforms have been widely beneficial, and that patience is needed to realize the positive results of economic reform policies. Variations in regional economic conditions and political partisanship may influence economic attitudes in complex ways. Simple ideas about "northern" and "southern" views of economic structure and reform should be set aside.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The Afrobarometer is a joint enterprise of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), the Ghana Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), and Michigan State University (MSU), USA. In addition to Nigeria, the countries covered by surveys in Round 2 were: Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Information on the Afrobarometer and survey results for these countries can be obtained from any of the above partner institutions, or at http://www.afrobarometer.org/.

[2] The contents of the questionnaire were modeled on a series of Afrobarometer surveys completed in 15 other African countries.

[3] The median is the *middle value* of the total age range of the respondents, which extended from 18-90. In other words, half of the respondents fell above this age, and half below.

[4] The changing ratio of urban and rural respondents in the sample reflects updated demographic data and current estimates of Nigeria's urban population.

[5] This is a selected list of occupations from the total sample.

[6] In the 2001 and 2003 surveys, Ijaw language speakers were *oversampled*, or selected in numbers greater than their share of the population. The oversample (2001: n=127; 2003: n=113) permitted a fuller analysis of attitudes among this community. When analyzing the total national sample, we compensated by weighting all responses.

[7] In other words, in 19 out of 20 cases, the answers do not deviate more than 2 percent from what we would obtain if we interviewed all adult Nigerians.

[8] Because the survey question simply asked for a general expression of "trust," this interpretation is inexact.

[9] We report only views of the presidential election, since the results were nearly identical to views of the other elections.

[10] Nigeria consists of nearly 400 ethnic and linguistic groups joined into a single political entity through a series of amalgamations of peoples and territories between 1861 and 1914 by the British colonial government. There are two dominant religions (Christianity and Islam) whose adherents constantly suspect one another regarding space for religious practice as well as access to state resources.

[11] Since 1980, when the Maitatsine religious crisis erupted in Kano and spread to other places, there have been frequent violent ethnic and religious conflicts in different parts of the country.

[12] See the various contributions in A. Jega (2000) *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria.* Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet in collaboration with The Centre for Research and Documentation, Kano Nigeria.

[13] See discussion and evaluation of this view in Robert Mattes (2002) "Do Diverse Social Identities Inhibit Nationhood and Democracy? Initial Consideration from South Africa." In M. Palmberg (ed.), *National Identity and Democracy in Africa.*

[14] Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.) (1993) *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

[15] The complete question asked of respondents was: "We have spoken to many Nigerians and they all described themselves in different ways. Some people describe themselves in terms of their language, ethnic group, race religion, or gender and others describe themselves in economic terms, such as working class, middle class, or a farmer. Besides being a Nigerian, which specific group do you feel you belong to first and foremost."

[16] The question was framed as follows: "Let us suppose that you have to choose between being a Nigerian and being a ---------[respondent's identity group]. Which of these two groups do you feel most strongly attached to?"

[17] Respondents were asked to choose which of two statements was closest to their opinion, Statement A or Statement B. The statements were as follows: A: "Even if there are conflicts among different groups, Nigeria should remain united as one country"; B: while "The differences among Nigerians are too strong; for the sake of peace, the country should be broken apart."

[18] Peter Ekeh (1975) "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17(1); 91 - 112.

[19] K. Shettima and I. Chukwuma (2002) "Crime and Human Rights in Nigeria," International Council on Human Rights Policy.

[20] See contributions in E.E.O. Alemika and F. Okoye (eds.) (2002) *Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria*. Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor.

[21] The wording of the question was "Over what sort of problems do violent conflicts most often arise between different groups in this country?"

[22] See *Hope Betrayed: A Report on Impunity and State-Sponsored Violence in Nigeria* (2002), issued by World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) Switzerland, and Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN), Lagos, Nigeria. Policemen were killed in Odi (Rivers State), while 19 soldiers were allegedly killed by Tiv militias in Zaki Biam (Benue State); both events led to the deployment of soldiers to the areas and the subsequent killing of several people.

[23] See contributions in I. A. Ayua and B. Owasanoye (eds.) (2002) *Problems of Corruption in Nigeria.* Lagos: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies.

[24] E.E.O. Alemika (2003) "Police, Policing and Rule of Law in Transitional Countries," in Lone Lindholt, *et al.* (eds.) *Human Rights and the Police in Transitional Countries.* The Hague: Kluwer Law International.

[25] B.O. Nwabueze (1992) *Military Rule and Constitutionalism.* Ibadan: Spectrum Law Series, p.18.