

AFRO BAROMETER

Working Paper No. 70

KENYANS AND DEMOCRACY: WHAT DO THEY REALLY WANT FROM IT, ANYWAY?

by Carolyn Logan, Thomas P. Wolf and
Robert Sentamu

**A comparative series of national public
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and civil society in Africa.**



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April 2007

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AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

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Managing Editor: Carolyn Logan

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Kenyans and Democracy: What Do They Really Want From It Anyway?

Abstract

Between 2003 and 2005, satisfaction with “the way democracy works in Kenya” dropped a full 26 percentage points, plummeting from 79 percent in 2003, to just 53 percent by 2005. This does not appear to bode well for democracy in Kenya. But there are numerous practical and analytical questions about what “satisfaction with democracy” really means, what it measures, and whether it matters. Some analysts have argued that the very concept and meaning of satisfaction with democracy is ambiguous, and that the measure should be abandoned. Others regard it as a useful summary indicator of support for a regime. To answer some of these questions, we analyze links between declines in satisfaction with democracy and indicators of system support, system function, and incumbent performance. We find that satisfaction with democracy is actually a very useful indicator, revealing important things about what Kenyans expect democracy to do for them and their society. Arguing that we should abandon this indicator in part because it is linked to people’s varying hopes and values concerning their political system therefore overlooks one of its key *strengths*. In particular, it helps to show which of the many “promises” of democracy Kenyans are most interested in seeing fulfilled. Among other things, we find that having “the right institutions” matters to Kenyans, but they want *outputs* even more, both political ones as well as more instrumental or material ones. And the democratic output that is most on Kenyans’ minds is *equality*, both political and economic. More than anything else, Kenyans hope that democracy will bring about a more equitable distribution of opportunity and resources in their society. Growing dissatisfaction with the current constitution and disappointment in the government’s handling of the reform process also played a key role in declining satisfaction.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between 2003 and 2005, satisfaction with “the way democracy works in Kenya” dropped a full 26 percentage points, plummeting from 79 percent in 2003, to just 53 percent by 2005. This does not appear to bode well for democracy in Kenya. But there are numerous practical and analytical questions about what “satisfaction with democracy” really means, what it measures, and whether it matters.

Some analysts have argued, for example, that the very concept and meaning of satisfaction with democracy is ambiguous, and that the measure is interpreted inconsistently. They suggest it should be abandoned. Others regard it as a useful summary indicator of support for a regime, more so than for the current government. They also note, however, that respondents in newer democracies such as Kenya’s may understand the question differently.

To answer some of these questions about what, if anything, these declines in satisfaction with democracy mean for Kenya, we first examine responses to this question in detail, and then analyze their links to several types of indicators, including indicators of:

- *System support* – support for democracy and its formal rules and institutions;
- *System function* – the quality of the *political outputs* of these formal rules and institutions; and
- *Incumbent performance* – popular evaluations of the government’s day-to-day performance.

Regarding *changes in satisfaction with democracy across socio-demographic groups*, we find:

- Whereas positive attitudes were quite widespread and relatively consistent across groups in 2003, as dissatisfaction has grown, greater cross-group differences are observed.
- In particular, the gaps between young and old, men and women, educated and uneducated, and urban and rural have all widened between 2003 and 2005. Young people are particularly disillusioned relative to their elders.
- By far the most noticeable cross-group differences are with respect to ethnicity. Satisfaction with democracy has increased by 1 percent among the Meru, while falling by 43 percent among the Kamba.

Declines are also observed in almost all other indicators, but these changes range from insignificant to quite substantial.

Among indicators of system support:

- Support for democracy is down by just 5 percent, but support for the constitution has collapsed, dropping by 24 percent.
- Kenyans remain somewhat unconvinced about the benefits of multiparty competition, but the shifts that have occurred in this measure are relatively small.

Among indicators of system function:

- In 2005, over three-quarters still said that freedoms of speech, association and voting were better protected in 2005 than they had been a few years before;
- All indicators concerning equality, however, see marked declines. In particular, just 41 percent thought that equal treatment of all groups by government had improved in the past few years, compared to 65 percent in 2003.

Among indicators of incumbent performance:

- Extremely positive evaluations of the government’s handling of education are down, but not by much (94 to 85 percent).
- Kenyans are far more pessimistic about the state of the economy in 2005 at both the national and personal levels. A majority (54 percent) now rate the national economy as “fairly” or “very bad.”
- Likewise, ratings of the government’s economic performance have plummeted, led by marks for general management of the economy, which fell from 85 percent to 51 percent.

- The worst declines in government performance ratings, however, concern the fight against corruption, which saw a collapse of 45 percentage points (85 percent down to 40 percent).
- The president lost the approval of about one-quarter of Kenyans, falling from his position as the most popular leader across 16 countries in 2003 (92 percent) to the middle of the pack (65 percent).

Findings

Satisfaction with democracy is, in fact, a very useful indicator in Kenya, revealing important things about what Kenyans expect democracy to do for them and their society. It helps to show which of the many “promises” of democracy Kenyans are most interested in seeing fulfilled. In particular, we find that:

- Satisfaction with democracy is indeed a summary indicator, which combines evaluations of *system support* (to a lesser extent) with evaluations of both *system function* and *incumbent performance* (to a greater extent). Having “the right institutions” matters to Kenyans’ evaluations of democracy, but they want *outputs* even more, both political ones as well as more instrumental or material ones.
- Socio-demographic factors play at most a small role in determining variations in these measures. This is especially surprising with regard to ethnicity, given the wide variation in satisfaction with democracy seen across this variable. Ethnicity may, however, still play an important “behind the scenes” role, as several attitudes and evaluations (e.g., of equality, constitutional reform, and others) that are clearly linked to satisfaction with democracy vary significantly with ethnic identity.
- The democratic output that is most on Kenyans’ minds is *equality*, both political and economic. More than anything else, Kenyans hope that democracy will bring about a more equitable distribution of opportunity and resources in their society. Moreover, there is evidence that Kenyans are concerned about *equality* not only for themselves and their own ethnic group, but rather, that they see it as an important goal for the benefit of all groups in society.
- But Kenyans also expect democracy to bring them much more concrete benefits as well. First, they expect it to deliver more honest and effective leaders. Second, they count on democracy to help them solve their most immediate and pressing problems, especially by reducing corruption, strengthening the economy, and improving safety and security. The prediction that support for the current government along with these more immediate and instrumental evaluations of performance would play a greater role in determining the level of satisfaction with democracy in a newer democracy like Kenya’s is borne out.
- Finally, it is clear that the constitutional debate has played a key role in Kenyans’ evaluations of democracy over the past several years. Growing dissatisfaction with the current constitution and disappointment in the government’s handling of the reform process are among the most important factors resulting in declining satisfaction with democracy in 2005.

Thus, analysts who argue that we should abandon satisfaction with democracy as an indicator in part because it is linked to people’s varying hopes and values concerning their political system have overlooked one of the key *strengths* of this indicator. People can and should rate their democracies according to their own understandings, values, hopes and expectations. The satisfaction with democracy indicator can help us to look inside those understandings and explore Kenyans’ aspirations for their own political future.

INTRODUCTION

Between 2003 and 2005, satisfaction with “the way democracy works in Kenya” dropped a full 26 percentage points. Two successive Afrobarometer surveys show that it plummeted from a continent-leading high (among 16 countries) of 79 percent in 2003, to a bare majority of just 53 percent by 2005. On first blush, this does not appear to bode well for democracy in Kenya. But there are numerous practical and analytical questions about what “satisfaction with democracy” really means, what it measures, and whether it matters that must be addressed before we can draw any conclusions.

This analysis explores the concept of satisfaction with democracy, addressing these questions about its validity, and examining what this indicator tells us about Kenya’s political evolution in the early post-Moi era. We find that, contrary to some assertions, satisfaction with democracy is indeed a useful measure. In fact, decomposing satisfaction with democracy tells us some vitally important things about what Kenyans really want from democracy. To begin with, we find that the way Kenyans assess their own satisfaction with democracy is not uni-dimensional. Rather satisfaction is a complex and multi-faceted concept – what some have termed a “summary measure.” It captures elements of support for democratic institutions and structures (*system support*), perceptions of how well democracy functions in practice (*system function*), and evaluations of the performance of the incumbent government (*government performance*).

Several key findings stand out. Most significantly, the main hope Kenyans’ have for democracy is that it will set the country on the path toward a more equitable distribution of political and economic opportunity. The success or failure of the government in treating all people equally is the number one factor determining Kenyans’ satisfaction with democracy. Kenyans also value their democratic freedoms of speech, association and voting, and these too constitute a fundamental part of what they expect from democracy.

But they also have more down-to-earth, daily, instrumental expectations of the benefits that a democratically elected government should yield. Not unreasonably, Kenyans hope that democracy will provide them with an effective and honest leader who can tackle the country’s most pressing problems, especially the struggling economy and an environment of pervasive corruption. To the extent that it fails to do so, democracy will be regarded, at best, as only a partial success.

In sum, we find that satisfaction with democracy may actually be an *especially* useful indicator in newer democracies where popular understandings and expectations of democracy are not well understood. In young and partial democracies such as Kenya’s, what democracy means and what hopes people have for it are still uncertain and contested. Survey research explores these questions in a variety of ways, both direct and indirect. We ask Kenyans and other Africans, for example, what democracy means to them, and we have in the past asked about “the most essential features” of a democracy. But understanding how Kenyans come to their individual assessments of democratic satisfaction opens a new window onto the question of what, first and foremost, they really hope democracy will do for them and their country. In particular, it helps us to identify which of the numerous “promises” of democracy they value most highly. To some extent this finding turns the arguments of those who oppose the use of the satisfaction with democracy indicator on their heads. In fact, precisely because people rate democracies according to their own understandings, values, hopes and expectations, this indicator offers significant insights. Simultaneously, it also has value as a summary indicator for cross-country comparative analysis.

Before exploring these and related issues, we first describe the surveys’ parameters.

SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

The first Kenya Afrobarometer survey was conducted during August and September 2003. It went to the field less than eight months after the country's landmark transition from 24 years under President Daniel arap Moi (and 39 under the Kenyan African National Union (KANU)) to a new government under the leadership of Mwai Kibaki and the National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC). The second was conducted two years later, from 6th to 23rd September 2005.¹ Both surveys were based on nationally representative samples of Kenyan men and women of voting age. The 2003 poll surveyed 2,398 respondents, but due to resource limitations, the sample size for the second survey was reduced to 1,278. The first survey therefore has a margin of sampling error of +/-2 percent at a confidence level of 95 percent, while for the second the margin is slightly larger (+/-3 percent).

For both surveys, interviews were conducted in all eight provinces of Kenya, reaching both urban and rural areas in proportion to their share of the national population according to the 1999 census. However, in both surveys, North Eastern Province was oversampled to ensure that there would be enough cases for sub-sample analysis. However, all national-level statistics reported here are weighted to reflect the actual population share of North Eastern Province as reported in the census.

Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown of both samples.

BACKGROUND: TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK?

In formal, constitutional terms, Kenya's modern experiment with multiparty politics began with the 1992 elections, when, under immense domestic and international pressure, President Moi opened the door to renewed political competition.² However, it was not until NARC presented a unified front that Kenya's opposition was finally able to oust KANU from power in the 2002 elections (with nearly two-thirds of the vote in both the presidential and parliamentary contests). Only then did most Kenyans feel truly able to celebrate the country's liberation from one-party rule. NARC's achievement was met with an outpouring of national jubilation, and hopes were high both at home and abroad for a new government that had promised to usher in a new "people-based" constitution, address past human rights abuses, tackle corruption, create jobs, and, in general, resurrect the country's sagging economic, political and social fortunes.

From the outset, however, there were more grounds for caution evident than the euphoric Kenyan voting public seemed willing to admit. These included, especially, the very disparate origins of its leading elements. One major block, under the umbrella of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), had just exited KANU itself. This block included a number of individuals personally associated with the sort of abuses the new government claimed it considered anathema. In addition, the country's constitutional structure still left nearly unchecked power in an executive presidency. As a result, cracks in the NARC coalition³

¹ The 2003 survey was part of Afrobarometer Round 2, while the 2005 survey was part of Afrobarometer Round 3. Kenya was not included in Round 1 of the Afrobarometer. Round 2 included a total of 16 countries. In addition to Kenya, these were: Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Round 3 included these 16 countries plus Benin and Madagascar. For more information on the Afrobarometer, go to www.afrobarometer.org.

² The most comprehensive account of this development and its aftermath in terms of the 1992 election is by David W. Throup and Charles Hornsby, 1998, *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya: the Kenyatta and Moi States and the Triumph of the System in the 1992 Election* (Oxford: James Currey).

³ We note that NARC did not constitute a coalition in the more usual sense, that is, as a group of independent parties that come together post-election to form a working majority. It was NARC, rather than its constituent parties, that issued nomination certificates and contested the 2002 elections. The original party identities of its constituent parts

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Samples

	2003		2005	
	N (unweighted)	% (weighted)	N (unweighted)	% (weighted)
Total	2398	100	1278	100
Gender				
Male	1198	50.0	634	49.7
Female	1200	50.0	644	50.3
Location				
Urban	482	19.5	376	19.3
Rural	1916	80.5	902	80.7
Age				
18-30	1086	45.3	582	44.6
31-45	783	32.8	431	33.3
46-60	349	14.5	171	13.9
61 and over	154	6.4	87	7.5
Education				
No formal schooling	320	12.0	139	10.7
Primary only	902	38.3	514	43.0
Secondary only	857	36.2	436	33.3
Post-secondary	315	13.4	188	13.0
Province				
Central	296	13.1	152	13.1
Coast	208	8.7	128	8.7
Eastern	390	16.3	192	16.3
Nairobi	176	7.4	144	7.4
North Eastern	120	2.9	64	2.9
Nyanza	352	15.4	184	15.4
Rift Valley	584	24.3	270	24.3
Western	272	11.9	144	11.9
Religion				
Protestant	1138	48.6	485	39.4
Catholic	718	30.6	351	28.8
Other Christian	188	8.1	159	12.6
Muslim	247	8.2	152	9.0
Other	106	4.5	129	10.0
Ethnic group				
Kalenjin	280	11.7	176	16.7
Kamba	270	11.4	132	10.5
Kikuyu	450	19.5	230	17.8
Kisii	134	5.8	92	7.5
Luhya	354	15.3	165	13.0
Luo	284	12.4	156	11.1
Meru	164	6.9	85	7.1
Pastoralist groups	239	8.0	108	6.5
Other	219	9.1	134	9.8

had no formal status within government, although they remained registered legal entities, and some of those elected continued to refer to themselves in terms of their “original,” pre-NARC party identities. For his part, on several occasions Kibaki claimed that “these other little parties” no longer existed, contributing still further to NARC’s internal wrangles.

emerged almost immediately after the election, and have been exacerbated since.⁴ Tensions rose over perceived unfairness in the allocation of key cabinet posts and other positions in the state machinery, as well as Kibaki's decision to discard his one-term pledge. This latter issue proved especially contentious in the context of disagreements about proposed constitutional changes in Kenya's political structures.

Above all, however, were the bitter divisions that arose with regard to the constitutional reform process. The complex and troubled history of the country's constitutional reform efforts extends back more than a decade. But Kibaki's government won the 2002 election while campaigning, among other things, on a promise to promulgate a new constitution within 100 days of taking office that would, among other things, significantly reduce executive power.⁵ To make a long story short,⁶ it took much wrangling, multiple drafts, and unabashed insider maneuvering on the part of the government, to finally produce the so-called "Wako Draft" in mid-2005, just as the second survey was going to the field. This draft – energetically supported by the government⁷ – went on to defeat by a 57-43 margin in a national referendum on November 21, 2005. Despite widespread desire for reform, it was not possible to overcome broad disagreements about the exact shape that key elements of the new constitution should take. The re-structuring of executive power was an especially contentious issue. In fact, many previously committed reformers, having entered government, now stood to gain more by preserving the status quo with its structures of highly centralized executive authority that had previously been the primary target of their reform efforts. Several other issues also proved highly divisive, including the number of lower-level tiers of authority, the scope of the Islamic kadhi-courts, and certain provisions related to gender. This defeat and the divisions over the draft have since led to major shifts in the political landscape, beginning with the expulsion of nearly all LDP members from the cabinet in early 2006, and the new working alignment between the LDP and KANU (the official opposition party) that resulted.⁸

Other issues also chipped away at the public's post-transition optimism. For example, NARC's loudly-proclaimed zero-tolerance for corruption and government mismanagement was soon undermined by revelations (during 2004) of a number of massive corruption deals. Some of these had been initiated in the final years of the previous government, but others originated within the Office of the President under the new administration (the so-called Anglo-Leasing scandal). By 2005, the government's own anti-corruption "czar," the Permanent Secretary for Ethics and Governance, John Githongo, had quit in despair and gone into *de facto* exile. Moreover, the lack of action even in response to conclusive reports prepared by several very high-profile investigating commissions (e.g., Goldenberg and Ndung'u) also undermined public confidence in the government's commitment to tackle this issue. Not one major figure implicated in any of these corruption scandals has been convicted, let alone fined or imprisoned.⁹

⁴ See, for example, Holmquist (2005).

⁵ In fact, proposals for power sharing were conceived largely in terms of the country's major ethnic groups. Results from the 2003 Afrobarometer survey give graphic proof of this reality (Wolf, *et al.*, 2004).

⁶ For a thorough review of these processes, see Cottrell and Ghai (2007).

⁷ This defeat for the government side was not without considerable extra-legal backing. See Kenya National Commission of Human Rights and Kenya Human Rights Commission (2006), "Behaving Badly: Deception, Chauvinism and Waste During the Referendum Campaigns," Nairobi. The report also cites some abuses by those outside of the government who supported the "no" vote.

⁸ See also Wolf, 2006b.

⁹ Nor had any of the billions of shillings allegedly stashed overseas by members of the previous regime been located or recovered – another loudly-proclaimed NARC campaign pledge. At the same time, four ministers implicated in past and present scandals had exited Cabinet (several after being pressured to do so) at the time of the 2005 survey; two were subsequently re-appointed. For an overview of this record for Kibaki's government generally, and for the case of former President Moi in particular, see, B. Sihanya, ed., (2005) *Control of Corruption in Kenya: Legal-Political Dimensions, 2001-2004*, Nairobi: Claripress; and Wolf (2006b).

But the first whiff of such goings-on had yet to emerge at the time of the initial Afrobarometer survey. Rather, as was reported at the time (Wolf, *et al.*, 2004), it clearly captured the widespread public euphoria following the transition, and the high hopes for the country’s future. Drawing attention to Kenya’s standing in comparison to respondents in over a dozen other countries, the survey report noted that:

On item after item, Kenyans give some of the most positive assessments of their government’s performance, the quality of their democracy, and even the condition of the national economy, of any of the countries included in the survey. They also stand out as having one of the highest levels of commitment to democracy and democratic institutions, and their confidence in a more bountiful future is overwhelming. (Wolf, *et al.*, 2004: 1)

The report goes on to note, however, that, “In such a context, it is virtually inevitable that some ‘coming down-to-earth’ must occur. But the question for the NARC government, at least in part, is whether, for Kenyans, it will be a hard landing or a soft one” (*ibid.*, 60).

It is no surprise, then, to find that by 2005, much of the glow had worn off. Kenyans were getting re-acquainted with political reality, including the challenges of solving their most difficult problems and changing deeply entrenched attitudes and behaviors. The scale of this reality check was, however, notable. Declines are evident in virtually every indicator of government performance, as well as in public satisfaction with the political system and its functioning. These drops frequently reach 25 percentage points or even more.

We now turn to an assessment of these survey findings, beginning with satisfaction with democracy.

SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY, 2003-2005

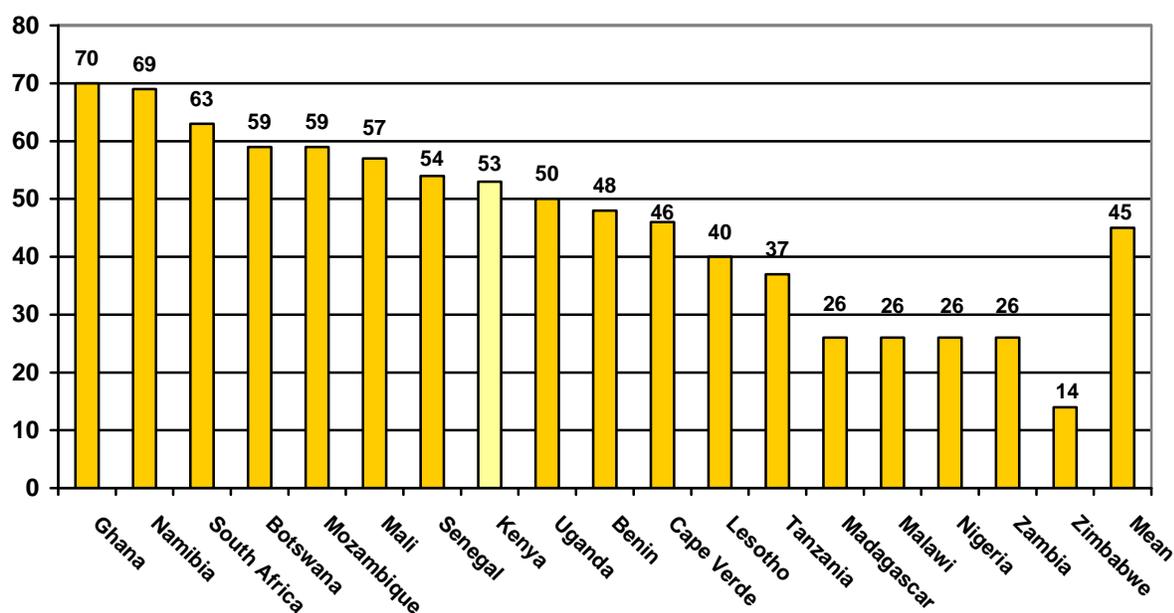
When we first interviewed Kenyans, they were the continent’s most satisfied democrats. In 2003, 79 percent said they were either “fairly” or “very satisfied” with “the way democracy works in Kenya.” This was well above the 16-country mean of 53 percent, and surpassed that of the next most satisfied country, Ghana (71 percent), by a relatively wide margin.

The picture had changed dramatically by 2005. Just two-and-a-half years after Kibaki’s government took power to widespread acclaim, satisfaction with the way democracy was working had plunged by 25 percentage points; by this time, only a slim majority (53 percent) expressed some degree of satisfaction with how democracy was performing (Table 2). In comparative terms, Kenyans had dropped from the lead position to the middle of the pack: the 18-country mean in Round 3 (2005-2006) was 45 percent, and Kenya ranked just 8th out of 18 countries (Figure 1).

Table 2: Status of Democracy, 2003-2005 (percent)

	2003	2005	difference
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Kenya?			
Fairly / very satisfied	78	53	-25
In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Kenya today?			
Full democracy or democracy with minor problems	76	52	-24

Figure 1: Satisfaction with Democracy across Countries, 2005-2006 (percent fairly / very satisfied)



As mentioned, some decline in the perceived supply of democracy over this period was to be expected. It was clear from a host of indicators that the Kenyan public was elated in 2003, reporting exceptionally positive ratings of the government across the board. But very high expectations of what the government could accomplish were also evident – expectations that no government could have realistically hoped to fulfill. But even given the extent of this wishful thinking, the magnitude of the drop in satisfaction in Kenya warrants further investigation. It is worth noting, for example, that the drop in satisfaction in Kenya roughly matches that observed in two early surveys in Nigeria. Satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria has since continued to free-fall over several subsequent rounds of surveys.¹⁰

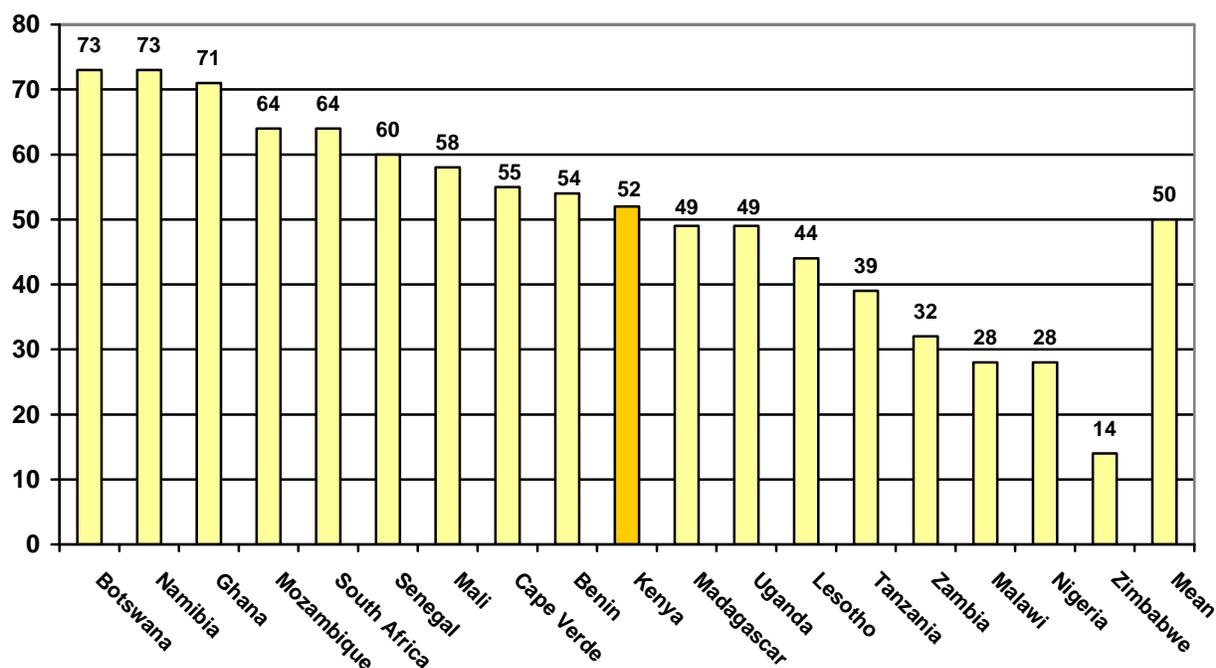
Yet Kenyans remain, at least on average, reasonably optimistic about the future of democracy in their country: in 2005, 60 percent believed that it was either “likely” or “very likely” that the country would remain a democracy (compared to a 17-country average of 54 percent).¹¹ Even so, this leaves a sizeable proportion (40 percent) expressing uncertainty about the country’s political future. It is thus worth a closer look to better understand how Kenyans judge their own satisfaction with democracy, and what this implies for the country’s political future.

Ratings of the extent of democracy followed a similar pattern, dropping 24 points in just two years (Table 2). Specifically, in 2003, 76 percent thought the country was either a “full democracy,” or a democracy “but with minor problems,” while just 52 percent gave the country similarly positive ratings in 2005. Cross-nationally, Kenya dropped from 1st (of 16) to 10th (of 18) among the countries surveyed (Figure 2).

¹⁰ Satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria dropped from 84 percent in 2000, just 8 months after the country’s transition to democracy, to 57 percent just one and a half years later. Since then, it has plummeted still further, falling as low as 26 percent in 2005, though it rebounded slightly to 39 percent in early 2007.

¹¹ This question was not asked in 2003, and it was not asked in Zimbabwe in Round 3 (2005-6).

Figure 2: Extent of Democracy across Countries, 2005-2006 (percent full democracy or democracy, but with minor problems)



A VALID CONCEPT?

There is some controversy among analysts over the interpretation, and in fact the very validity, of the concept of democratic satisfaction. Canache, *et al.*, (2001), for example, argue that this concept “taps multiple dimensions of political support,” and thus means different things to different people, and in different countries. Moreover, they contend that various analysts have explicitly interpreted the question to mean diverse things, some treating it as a measure of system support, others as a measure of performance of the incumbent government, and still others as a mixture of the two. As such, they conclude that the meaning of the question is ambiguous, rendering it useless as an indicator (506-510).

Anderson (2001), however, rejects these conclusions. He counters that, while imperfect, satisfaction with democracy has proven to be a reasonably reliable indicator, usually linked primarily to relatively diffuse system support (or “regime performance”), more so than to specific incumbent performance. Anderson also argues that analysts’ use of the concept has been much less careless and inconsistent than Canache, *et al.*, suggest. He points out, though, that the concept may operate somewhat differently in newer democracies: “[T]he link between specific support and system performance on one hand and the satisfaction with democracy measure should be much stronger in newer democracies where there is less of a reservoir of diffuse support” (7). This Kenyan case study may prove a useful test of this hypothesis.

We will therefore evaluate satisfaction with democracy in Kenya in light of both the dramatic changes observed between 2003 and 2005, and the equally sharp questions that have been raised about what, if anything, the concept means. We will do so by interrogating popular understandings of satisfaction with democracy, examining the relationship of this concept to a number of other indicators. Doing so should shed some light concerning both the validity of this concept in general, and its specific meaning in the Kenyan context. In particular, we will analyze the links between satisfaction with democracy and three key types of indicators.

First, we will consider indicators of *system support*, which tap into popular backing for a country's system of government. These can include aggregate indicators, most notably the classic indicator of "support for democracy."¹² They can also encompass more particular measures of support for specific components of a nation's political and institutional structures (e.g., the constitution itself, or particular structures or practices embedded in it¹³). System support is thus concerned with what Kenyans' regard as the "right" or most appropriate set of political structures and institutions for their country.

Second, we will consider indicators of *system function*. These measures register popular evaluations of how the political system and its rules and structures actually perform in practice.¹⁴ For example, while support for freedom of speech *in principle* would be an indicator of system support, evaluations of how well freedom of speech is actually protected *in practice* would be a measure of system function. In other words, we are concerned here not with the structures, but with the *political outputs* of those structures.

Finally, we will consider indicators of *incumbent performance*. Here we are concerned with popular evaluations of the government's day-to-day presence in people's lives.

Of course, in reality the distinctions among these ideal categories can be somewhat fuzzy. For example, attitudes toward multipartyism as a structure (i.e., a component of system support) are unlikely to be divorced from evaluations of how political competition plays out in practice (i.e., an element of system function). And many aspects of system function (e.g., how freedom of speech works in practice) are likely to reflect, at least in part, evaluations of the incumbent government.

In Kenya, overlaps among these conceptual categories are particularly evident with respect to the constitution. Support for the current constitution should be considered an element of system support. But attitudes toward the current constitution are certainly linked to popular evaluations of the government's performance in managing the constitutional reform process specifically,¹⁵ as well as to broader aspects of support for the government¹⁶ (both elements of incumbent performance). Moreover, evaluations of the overall reform *process* and how it has progressed, if we had them, would properly be considered elements of *system function*.

Anderson notes, however, that it is common – in fact, probably inevitable – to find that indicators of diffuse and specific support for a political system are correlated, often strongly (2-4). We concur with his

¹² Note that elsewhere in their paper, Canache, *et al.*, actually separate these variables into two separate categories, distinguishing between support for the political system more specifically and support for democracy as a system of government more generally. This distinction is not central to our analysis, however, and we will treat support for democracy as one component of system support.

¹³ Note that institutional confidence or trust is commonly used as an indicator of system support (also referred to as "regime performance"). We avoid the use of these institutional trust indicators, however, because institutional trust cannot be clearly distinguished from incumbent support in the Kenyan context. For example, trust in the president and approval of presidential performance are correlated with Pearson's $r=.606$ at significance at $p\leq .01$. While Anderson notes that it is well known that indicators of diffuse support (e.g., trust, at least in theory) and specific support (e.g., performance) are often correlated, this very high degree of correlation suggests that, at least in Kenya, questions of trust are better treated as indicators of specific support for the government, rather than of diffuse support for the regime.

¹⁴ Anderson refers to this as a country's *constitutional reality*, a term that we consider apt, but which we will avoid using here to avoid confusion in the discussion, given the centrality of Kenya's current constitution and the constitutional reform process to the country's democratic experience of the past few years (Anderson, 2001: 12, citing Dieter Fuchs, Giovanna Guidorossi and Palle Svensson, 1995, "Support for the Democratic System," in Hans-Dieter Klingemann and Dieter Fuchs, eds., *Citizens and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press: 328

¹⁵ Pearson's $r=.145$, significant at $p< .01$.

¹⁶ Pearson's r for the correlation between support for the constitution and evaluation of presidential performance is $.169$, significant at $p< .01$.

argument that it would therefore be pointless to discard our indicators, or our conceptual categories, on this basis. Thus, while these indicators may not be as empirically distinct as we might like, the conceptual distinctions and their value as a basis for structuring our analysis of satisfaction with democracy should be clear.

We will continue our analysis with a simple demographic analysis of the changes observed in satisfaction with democracy between 2003 and 2005. We will then elaborate further on the conceptual categories introduced here. We will identify the specific indicators to be considered for each, before continuing on to the analysis of the linkages between these indicators and satisfaction with democracy.

DECLINING SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY: WHO IS SATISFIED, OR NOT?

We begin by noting the growing disillusionment among 18 to 30 year olds. Young Kenyans shared the positive disposition of their elders in 2003, expressing equally high levels of satisfaction with democracy. But by 2005 they were markedly less satisfied than others (Table 3). Their level of satisfaction fell fully 29 points, and the gap between youth and 46-60 year-olds climbed from just one percentage point up to 13 percent. This could indicate that young people have higher expectations of democracy than older Kenyans, who may have been more realistic about what the 2002 transition could really produce. The higher level of dissatisfaction among the country's youngest cohort is particularly important given the prominence of the under-30s in the population pyramid: 45 percent of respondents were aged 30 or under.

Declines in satisfaction are also substantially larger among women than among men. By 2005, the gap between men and women had grown from just 4 percent to 13 percent. But this is not because women are more dissatisfied, but rather, because they are more uncertain or ambivalent than men. Consistent with findings elsewhere (Logan and Bratton, 2005), women were much more likely to respond "don't know" whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with democracy (23 percent of women, compared to just 8 percent of men. Lower levels of media access and political awareness and participation among women may all contribute to the gap. Women may also simply be more willing to *admit* uncertainty or ignorance.

Educated respondents were more likely to be satisfied with democracy, while urban respondents were less so, despite being considerably more educated than rural-dwellers. With regard to education, the key distinction is again that the less educated are far more likely to "opt out" of rating the system than the educated, not that the former are more dissatisfied. Fully 40 percent of those with no formal education respond that they "don't know" how satisfied they are, compared to just 7 percent among those with at least some secondary school education. Greater skepticism among urbanites, in contrast, likely reflects the higher media exposure and political awareness of urban residents, and perhaps also their higher degree of dependence on state services for their daily survival.

By far the most startling inter-group differences, however, are those observed across region and ethnicity. Satisfaction with democracy has declined in every province, but the drop ranges from 13 percent in Central Province, to a whopping 55 percent in Coast Province, and 45 percent in North Eastern. Similarly, among the Meru, whose home is in Eastern Province, satisfaction is actually up by 1 point. But among the Kamba – also of Eastern Province, and one of the most satisfied ethnic groups in 2003 – it has dropped 43 points, to just 42 percent. Politically, the Meru are closely aligned with the neighboring Kikuyu,¹⁷ the President's ethnic group, so their high levels of satisfaction are not surprising. In fact, the

¹⁷ Along with the Embu, these groups form what is sometimes referred to as the "Mt. Kenya cluster."

Table 3: Changes in Satisfaction with Democracy (percent fairly / very satisfied)

	2003	2005	Difference
Age			
18-30	78	49	-29
31-45	81	56	-25
46-60	77	61	-16
61 and over	73	52	-21
Gender			
Male	80	59	-21
Female	76	46	-30
Urban-Rural			
Urban	76	47	-29
Rural	79	54	-25
Education			
No schooling	63	37	-26
Primary only	81	52	-29
Secondary only	81	58	-23
Post-secondary	78	58	-20
Province			
Central	77	64	-13
Coast	85	30	-55
Eastern	81	59	-22
Nairobi	71	39	-32
North Eastern	71	26	-45
Nyanza	85	60	-25
Rift Valley	77	57	-20
Western	73	48	-25
Ethnic Group			
Kalenjin	79	52	-27
Kamba	85	42	-43
Kikuyu	81	61	-20
Kisii	88	63	-25
Luhya	72	52	-20
Luo	82	56	-26
Meru	76	77	1
Pastoralists	64	37	-27
Other	79	35	-44
TOTAL	78	53	-25

Meru affiliated themselves even more closely with the (then) ruling NARC coalition¹⁸ than the Kikuyu (81 percent of Meru, versus 53 among the Kikuyu¹⁹). The fact that satisfaction with democracy dropped

¹⁸ As suggested above, since the 2005 survey there has been considerable shifting and political realignment. In addition to the LDP's departure, some of the other original NARC partners, increasingly alienated by what they see as the selfishness and arrogance of the Mt. Kenya elite around Kibaki, have expressed reluctance to again offer their party's support to his 2007 re-election bid. And considering the on-going tensions between what remains of NARC and newcomer NARC-Kenya, even Kibaki's own party affiliation (in terms of what ticket he will run on) remains unclear.

¹⁹ Leaders and voters from Meru provided Kibaki's pre-NARC Democratic Party (DP) with its deepest and most stable support throughout his decade-long sojourn in the opposition.

20 points even among the Kikuyu likely reflects the divisions within this community between those who were pro-Kibaki and supporters of Uhuru Kenyatta, also a Kikuyu, and leader of the opposition KANU. The roots of the particularly stark disenchantment of the Kamba people with democracy are harder to disentangle. They are one of the most deprived groups in Kenya, a condition that at least in part reflects the semi-arid nature of much of their Eastern Province homeland. They may, therefore, have had some of the highest hopes for concrete benefits following Kibaki’s election. Yet in reality, economic growth has been concentrated in the most productive agricultural parts of the country and in areas of tourism attractions, few of which are found in Kamba areas. In addition, a leading Kamba politician, Kalonzo Musyoka, had been increasingly at odds with the Kibaki inner-core (although he was still in the Cabinet at the time of the survey²⁰).

SYSTEM SUPPORT

Turning to our first set of indicators that may be linked to satisfaction with democracy, the Afrobarometer includes several indicators of *system support*. We will begin with our key aggregate indicator of popular backing for Kenya’s current system of government: support for democracy. We will then consider two more particular measures: support for multiparty competition, and support for the current constitution.

Support for Democracy

In 2003, across 16 countries, Kenyans were second only to Ghanaians in the level of support they expressed for democracy as a system of government. Fully 80 percent agreed with the statement that “democracy is preferable to any other kind of government,” compared to just 8 percent who thought that a non-democratic system could be preferable in some circumstances (Table 4). By 2005, support for democracy had dropped, but only slightly, to 75 percent, and Kenyans continue to “top the chart” on this measure. Across 18 countries in 2005, Kenyans join Ghanaians and Senegalese in expressing the greatest support for democracy (see Figure 3). It would thus appear that the strong support for democracy expressed by Kenyans in 2003 was not transitory. Kenyans are more than fair weather democrats.

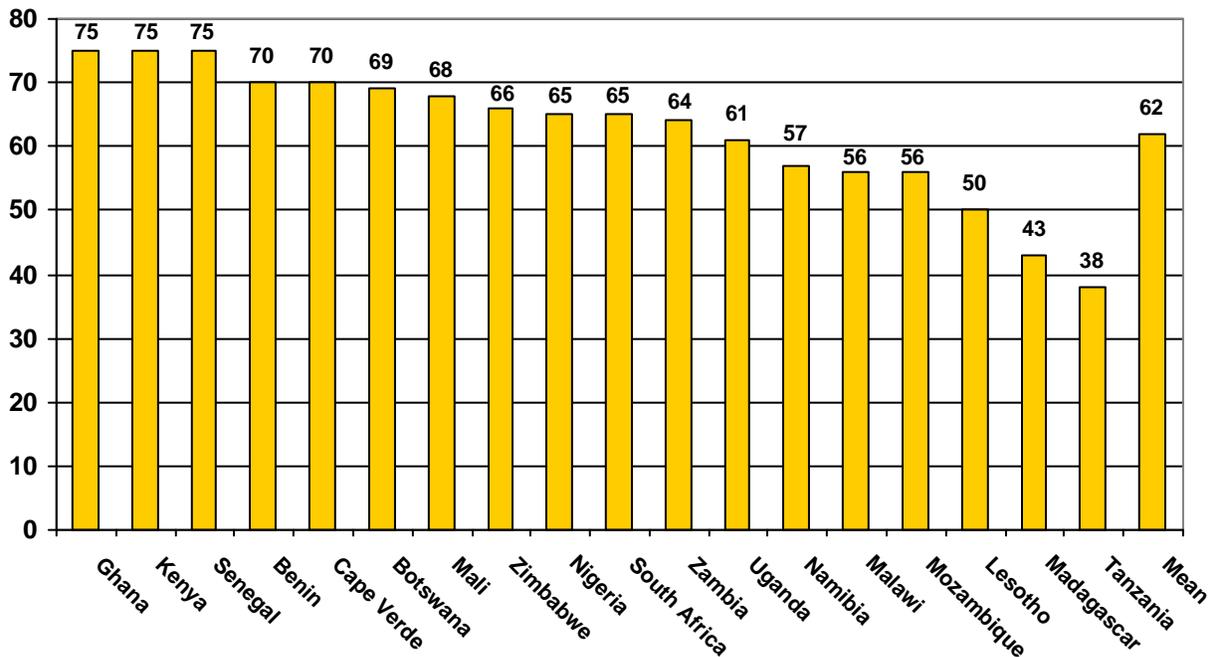
Table 4: Demand for Democracy, 2003-2005

	2003	2005
Which of the following statements is closest to your view (percent):		
A. Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.	80	75
B. In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.	8	5
C. To someone like me it doesn’t matter what system of government we have.	5	8
Don’t know	7	13
There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives (percent disapprove / strongly disapprove):		
The army comes in to govern the country	92	89
Elections and the parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything	90	88
Only one political party is allowed to stand for elections and hold office	75	74

²⁰ He later left the cabinet as part of the LDP expulsion following the government’s defeat in the constitutional referendum. Musyoka is now among the leading potential challengers to Kibaki in the forthcoming presidential race.

Other findings confirm the stability of this support. In further exploring commitment to democracy, we asked whether Kenyans approved or disapproved of several alternative systems of government. Fully nine out of ten respondents rejected both military rule (89 percent) and “one-man” rule by an “imperial” president who abolishes parliament (88 percent). Three-quarters (74 percent) disapproved of a one-party state. Rates of rejection of these authoritarian alternatives have remained quite steady, with declines in rejection rates of just 1 to 3 percent, differences that are well within the margin of sampling error.

Figure 3: Support for Democracy, 2005-2006 (percent agree democracy is preferable)



Support for Multiparty Competition

As we saw, Kenyans are somewhat more ambivalent about a one-party state as compared to other forms of authoritarian rule. This suggests that, like some other Africans, Kenyans may welcome the freedoms associated with democracy, but remain less than fully enamored of its competitive aspects. What do other indicators tell us about the support for competitive party politics?

It is clear, first of all, that Kenyans do not have doubts about the value of voting: they continue to resolutely support elections as the most appropriate means for selecting their leaders (88 percent in 2005, 89 percent in 2003). Support for multiparty competition has, however, dropped slightly, from 74 percent in 2003 to 69 percent in 2005 (Table 5). After a decade of struggling to make multipartyism a functioning reality, it appears that some Kenyans remain to be fully convinced of the value of party choice. Despite this decline, however, Kenyans continue to be more supportive of multiparty competition than people elsewhere in Africa: across 18-countries in 2005, an average of 63 percent supported it. But the decline in Kenya counters the prevalent upward trend seen across 16 countries, which saw support climb 8 points, up from 55 percent in 2003.

This small drop in support for multiparty competition in Kenya may be linked to the even sharper *increase* in the number of Kenyans who believe that party competition and violent conflict are directly connected. In 2003, 54 percent asserted that competition between political parties “often” or “always” leads to violent conflict, but by 2005 this had climbed to 66 percent. This finding is somewhat surprising given that by most measures Kenyans’ actual experience of political violence has decreased in recent

years. During the 1990s, frequent outbreaks of violence along the coast and in the Rift Valley were widely attributed to the Moi regime’s efforts to intimidate its rivals, and voters. In contrast, the run-up to the 2002 elections was generally quite peaceful, as were the immediate post-transition years, for the most part. It is true that at the time of the second survey in 2005, tensions were beginning to rise in the context of the bitter campaigns for and against the proposed draft constitution. However, the survey was conducted almost immediately after the referendum was announced, and before the heightened national tensions and occasional violence associated with the referendum had fully emerged.

Table 5: Attitudes Toward Elections and Multiparty Competition

Which of these statements is closest to your view. Choose Statement A or Statement B:	2003	2005
A. We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open and honest elections.	89	88
B. Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country’s leaders.	10	9
A. Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Kenya.	23	25
B. Many political parties are needed to make sure that Kenyans have real choices in who governs them.	74	69

The Kenyan Constitution

System support also includes support for a country’s constitutional structure. As discussed, this has been an issue of special significance in Kenya over the past several years, culminating in the defeat of the government-backed “Wako Draft” in a November 2005 referendum. This defeat occurred despite the fact that in the 2003 survey we found a widespread popular consensus concerning the need for constitutional reform: fully 81 percent believed that “constitutional reform was still needed to strengthen democracy in Kenya” even with the new government in power.

The divisions and disappointments of the constitutional reform process are clearly reflected in Kenyans’ shattered confidence in their present constitution, which remains the law of the land despite the widespread desire for reform. In 2003, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) expressed confidence that it “expresses the values and hopes of the Kenyan people.” But by 2005, positive perceptions of the Constitution had plunged; just 40 percent expressed confidence in the document, a 24-point drop (Table 6). Moreover, a plurality (46 percent) voiced their dissatisfaction with the government’s handling of the review process, compared to just 33 percent who thought the administration had done a good job (21 percent were unsure).²¹ Given the centrality of the reform issue to the country’s political life in recent years, the failure to achieve reform may well have undermined democracy in the popular mind.

Table 6: The Constitution and the Failed Reform Process

	2003	2005	difference
Our constitution expresses the values and hopes of the Kenyan people (agree / strongly agree)	64	40	-24
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way in which the current government has handled the constitutional review process up to now? (percent fairly / very satisfied)	NA	33	NA

²¹ Note that, per our earlier discussion, evaluations of the government’s handling of the constitutional reform process will be treated as an indicator of *incumbent performance*.

SYSTEM FUNCTION

We now turn from indicators of support for the structures and institutions of democracy to popular assessments of how well these institutions are functioning in practice, i.e., to indicators of *system function*. Conceptually, evaluation of system function is quite similar to examining *democratic quality*. Diamond and Morlino (2005) identify multiple dimensions and numerous indicators of democratic quality – too many to tackle here. For the purposes of this analysis, we will focus on what they describe as the “substantive dimension” of democratic quality, comprised of freedom and equality, because these are the elements that most closely correspond to Kenyans’ own definitions of democracy. When we asked respondents in 2005 “What, if anything, does democracy mean to you?” mentions of civil liberties and personal freedoms were far and away the most common responses (43 percent).²² These were followed by elections and multiparty competition (15 percent), and equality and justice (9 percent). We will therefore focus our assessments of system function on popular perceptions of how the system is performing in Kenya with regard to protection and expansion of political freedoms, and equal treatment of all citizens.²³

Political Freedoms

When offering their own definitions of democracy, the rights and freedoms Kenyans mentioned most frequently were freedom of speech and association, as well as voting freedom. In 2005, Kenyans remained quite pleased with what they saw as extensive improvements in the protection and enjoyment of these most basic of rights and privileges (Table 7). Over three-quarters said that freedoms of speech, association and voting were better protected in 2005 than they had been a few years before. The figures are down slightly – from 3 to 7 points – from 2003, but this is perhaps unsurprising given the relatively uncritical mood that shaped responses at that time.²⁴

Table 7: Evaluations of Political Freedoms

Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same? (percent better / much better)	2003	2005	difference
Freedom to join any political organization you want	81	78	-3
Freedom to say what you think	84	77	-7
Freedom to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured	81	76	-5

In 2003, the question read: “We are going to compare our new government under President Kibaki with the former government under President Moi. Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they used to be, or about the same?”

For the record, though, not all forms of democratic progress fare as well as the protection of individual rights and freedoms. Kenyans are, for example, much less optimistic in 2005 about whether they actually have greater opportunity to influence the government in the Kibaki era. In 2003, 67 percent thought that they had greater ability to influence government than before, while in 2005, just 47 percent thought so. But other analysis suggests that Africans’ expectations of their right to influence political decision making

²² Respondents could give up to three open-ended responses, which were recorded verbatim and later post-coded. Percentages shown are the share of all substantive responses. Note, though, that roughly one-third (34 percent) of all respondents could not offer any definition.

²³ Unfortunately, a question on election quality was not asked in 2003, so we must exclude this third dimension of democratic quality from the present analysis.

²⁴ In 2003, the euphoria was so widespread that even a large majority of those who identified themselves as supporters of the recently-ousted KANU party reported that rights were better protected under the new NARC administration (see Wolf, *et al.*, 2004). Even in 2005, more than 60 percent of those who affiliated themselves with KANU still report improvements in protection of these rights relative to “a few years ago.”

are much less developed than their sense of personal rights and freedoms (Bratton and Logan, 2006). Thus, at this stage, individual influence on leaders and policies may still be much less central to Kenyans' ideas of the core features of democracy than either securing rights or ensuring equality. This particular factor is therefore less likely to shape popular assessments of the overall quality of the system, and will be left for future analysis.

Equality

As mentioned, Kenyans also identify equality as a central principle of democracy, and other studies have found similar popular emphasis on this issue.²⁵ Of course, "equality" is a multi-faceted concept that covers a host of possible concerns. In other words, we might ask, "equality of *what*, and for *whom*?" Are Kenyans concerned with political opportunities and resources, material ones, or both? And are they concerned primarily with ethnic imbalances, as the conventional wisdom might suggest? Or is the country's burgeoning women's movement an indicator that gender equality might also be a priority concern?

We begin by noting the troubling finding that in 2005, a majority (54 percent) of Kenyans believed that people are often or always "treated unequally under the law." This is up 10 percentage points from 2003 (44 percent). Political, and in particular legal, inequality certainly seems to be on the public's mind. However, gender imbalance does not seem to be a factor here; men's and women's views on this issue were essentially identical. But economic equality is perhaps an even more serious concern.²⁶ More than two-thirds (69 percent) reported that Kenya's notoriously severe income inequality²⁷ was worse in 2005 than a few years previously. Clearly both political and economic inequality are of concern.

The conventional wisdom about the salience of ethnic identity in Kenyan politics would suggest that feelings of inequality may be rooted in a sense of ethnic imbalance in government. Tables 8 and 9 partly bear this out. Pluralities of Kenyans thought that their own ethnic group was worse off than others in terms of both their economic standing and their political influence. Moreover, fully 70 percent believed that the government, at least occasionally treated their ethnic group unfairly. This suggests a relatively high degree of sensitivity concerning issues of ethnic imbalance. The failure of the recently released draft constitution to address the hopes of some groups for a restructuring of political power to ensure greater inter-group balance may have heightened these sensitivities at the time of the survey.

However, Kenyans do not see inequality purely in terms of a self-centered version of ethnicity (Table 9). To be sure, significant proportions of most ethnic groups think their own group suffers from unequal treatment. But the numbers who report that people generally are being treated unequally are often considerably higher (e.g., by 35 points among the Kisii, and by 30 points among the Luhya). Only the

²⁵ For example, a survey conducted last year for the Westminster Foundation For Democracy found that the second most frequently-cited failing of Kenyan democracy was the "unequal distribution of resources" (see Wolf, 2006a). And in a survey conducted for a government committee appointed by the President to suggest the "way forward" on the review process, fully half of all those surveyed identified the "main purpose of a constitution" as "promoting an equal distribution of national resources" as opposed to simply delineating institutions and offices through which public power is exercised, and how those offices are filled (see Republic of Kenya, 2006, "Report of the Committee of Eminent Persons," Government Printer, Nairobi). Finally, in another government-sponsored survey, one in five Kenyans felt that their right to "equal treatment before the law" was "largely absent" (Republic of Kenya, 2006 (GJLOS))

²⁶ Although when reporting on their own economic situation, the concern is not quite as starkly registered. When asked to compare their own living conditions to those of other Kenyans, 35 percent said they were worse, 35 percent said they were the same, and 25 percent said they were better.

²⁷ In terms of such indicators as ownership of both land and other capital assets, as well as personal or household income, Kenya has been ranked by various studies as the first or second most unequal in sub-Saharan Africa, and within the half-dozen most unequal in the world.

Meru neither feel the sting of inequality themselves, nor notice that any other groups are facing such problems.

Table 8: Ethnic Sensitivity to Inequality

	2005
Think about the condition of [your ethnic group]. Are their economic conditions worse, the same as, or better than other groups in this country?	
Worse / Much worse	44
Same	31
Better / Much better	22
Think about the condition of [your ethnic group]. Do they have less, the same, or more influence in politics than other groups in this country?	
Less / Much less	38
Same	32
More / Much more	25
How often are [members of your ethnic group] treated unfairly by government?	
Always	13
Often	19
Sometimes	38
Never	22

Table 9: Perceptions of Unequal Treatment, by Ethnic Group (percent often / always)

	Your ethnic group treated unfairly	People treated unequally
Kalenjin	38	56
Kamba	44	67
Kikuyu	11	40
Kisii	13	48
Luhya	22	52
Luo	54	76
Meru	8	16
Pastoralists	58	60
Other	52	66
Total	32	54

Finally, how do Kenyans rate their society’s progress in securing equality in recent years? In 2003, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) reported that the government was doing a better job of treating all people equally than it had been under President Moi. However, by 2005 just 41 percent felt that way (Table 10).²⁸

Table 10: Perceptions of Equal Treatment

	2003	2005	difference
Please tell me if the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or are they about the same: equal and fair treatment of all groups by government. (percent better / much better)	65	41	-24

²⁸ Recall here, too, that “appointments to be based on merit” was another key NARC campaign promise.

INCUMBENT PERFORMANCE

Finally, we turn to indicators of support for the current government, its policies and programs. We will focus here primarily on indicators related to what might be described as the Kibaki government's "signature issues": free primary education, job creation, improving management of the national economy, and tackling the problems of corruption and crime.²⁹ In addition, we will consider one aggregate-level indicator: presidential performance evaluations.

Education

One of the Kibaki government's first steps upon taking office was to enact a policy of free primary education. This explains the remarkable 94 percent positive marks the government received for its handling of "addressing educational needs" in 2003. The public's appreciation for this move largely withstood the test of time, though by 2005, a bit of the glow had worn off. This is not surprising, considering issues such as overcrowded classrooms and declining educational quality that often confront such programs, especially in their early stages. But the 85 percent level of support for the government's efforts in this sector recorded in 2005 is still resoundingly positive. Evaluations of the government's provision of other social services received lower ratings, although the health sector still performs respectably (Table 11). Confidence in the government's ability to handle critical water supply issues, however, started low and continues to decline. Efforts to revamp the country's water resource management structures and policies do not appear to be met with public confidence.³⁰

Table 11: Incumbent Government Handling of Social Services

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (percent fairly / very well)	2003	2005	difference
Addressing educational needs	94	85	-9
Improving basic health services	75	69	-6
Combatting HIV/AIDS	78	73	-5
Delivering household water	41	32	-9

The Economy

Another key issue at the top of many Kenyans' agendas in the 2002 campaign was the country's moribund economy, which had been run into the ground after years of misrule by the Moi government.³¹ On paper, it would appear that, along with the introduction of free primary education, the government's other main achievement has been its contribution to boosting economic growth. According to official statistics, the Kenyan economy grew by about 4.3 percent in 2004, 5.8 percent in 2005, and just over 6 percent in 2006 (projected). In addition, the Kenya Revenue Authority reports a significant increase in tax collection, while activity at the Nairobi Stock Exchange has also risen (see also Afrobarometer, 2006a).

Nonetheless, despite these positive trends, many Kenyans have grown disillusioned with the country's economic performance and prospects. They are far more pessimistic about the state of the economy in 2005 than they were two years previously (Table 12). The proportion of respondents rating the condition of the national economy as "fairly" or "very bad" has risen from 31 percent to 54 percent, and those who rated their personal living conditions as such rose 10 points, from 35 percent to 45 percent. Similarly,

²⁹ In addition to evaluations of the government's handling of the constitutional reform process, already discussed.

³⁰ Or at least those measures that are being put into place, including the privatization of many such services, will take considerably longer to bear fruit in terms of popular approval.

³¹ It was widely reported that prior to leaving office, his government had driven the GDP growth rate into negative territory.

economic optimism has also declined sharply. In 2003, more than three-quarters of Kenyans thought their economic situation would be better in just one year, but this unrelenting optimism waned considerably: under half held out such hopes in 2005.

Table 12: Economic Evaluations: Past Present and Future

	2003	2005	difference
In general, how would you describe: (percent fairly / very bad)			
The present economic condition of this country.	31	53	+23
Your own present living conditions.	35	45	+10
Looking back, how do you rate the following compared to 12 months ago: (percent worse / much worse)			
Economic conditions in this country	23	42	+19
Your living conditions	21	36	+15
Looking ahead, do you expect the following to be better or worse: (percent better / much better)			
Economic conditions in this country in 12 months time	79	45	-34
Your living conditions in 12 months time	77	48	-29

Ratings of the government’s handling of specific economic issues have likewise plummeted (Table 13). In 2003, the marks for general management of the economy were among the government’s best: 85 percent said it was handling management of the economy either “fairly” or “very well.” But given that the government had been in office a mere eight months, we have to conclude that these ratings were based more on popular *hopes* than on any actual accomplishments. And even then, Kenyans were guarded about some of the specifics. Just 52 percent gave good marks for job creation in 2003; perhaps the campaign promise to create 500,000 jobs a year already looked unachievable. And even fewer thought it would succeed in keeping prices stable (49 percent), narrowing income gaps between rich and poor (38 percent), or ensuring that everyone had enough to eat (35 percent).

Table 13: Government Management of the Economy

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven’t you heard enough to say? (percent fairly / very well)	2003	2005	difference
Managing the economy	85	51	-32
Creating jobs	52	23	-29
Narrowing gaps between rich and poor	38	19	-19
Keeping prices stable	49	17	-32
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	35	20	-15

By 2005, people could begin to see what the government would actually produce in terms of economic revitalization. Only a very slim majority (51 percent) still gave positive marks for general economic management, a 32-point plunge from 2003. And on the more specific aspects of economic management, where ratings were already relatively low, the bottom virtually dropped away. Fewer than one in four Kenyans endorsed the government’s efforts to create jobs, keep prices stable, narrow income gaps, or ensure enough to eat. It appears that the economic gains of the last few years have yet to be felt by the public at large. In 2006, Kenya ranked an abysmal 152 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index, a decline from its starting position when Kibaki’s government took office.³²

³² The HDI is based on data that is lagged two years, i.e., the standing in 2006 is based on 2004 figures. In the *Human Development Report 2004*, Kenya ranked 148 of 177 countries. See <http://hdr.undp.org/>.

Corruption

The fight against corruption was another key plank in the government's 2002 campaign platform. As with the economy, there were high expectations, both for the punishment of past crimes,³³ and for the prevention of future misdeeds. The positive rating of government performance in this sector in 2003 was an astonishing 85 percent. By 2005, however, the tide had turned, and sharply. Just 40 percent gave the government a positive review, less than half the earlier figure (Table 14).

Kenyans' personal encounters with petty corruption held fairly steady during this period. But their perceptions of the extent of corruption within various sectors of government increased sharply, particularly among elected officials (parliamentarians and local government councilors) and in the Office of the President. The number reporting that "most" or "all" officials in the Office of the President engage in corrupt behavior more than tripled in the two years between the surveys (from 8 percent to 26 percent). And perceptions of corruption among elected officials, both at the local and national level, were also up very sharply, surpassing levels for those of local and national government officials. Even with respect to the police – already regarded in 2003 as the most corrupt government institution – perceptions worsened still further.³⁴

Table 14: Perceptions of Corruption

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? (percent fairly / very well)	2003	2005	difference
Fighting corruption in government	85	40	-45
How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? (percent most of them / all of them)			
The President and officials in his office	8	26	+18
Members of Parliament*	15	40	+25
Elected Local Government Councilors*	15	38	+23
National Government Officials**	30	33	+3
Local Government Officials**	30	37	+7
Police	59	64	+5
Judges and Magistrates	28	28	--
Teachers and School Administrators	14	9	-5

*In 2003, the question asked about "elected leaders, such as parliamentarians or local councilors," whereas these two groups were asked about separately in 2005.

**In 2003, the question asked about "government officials," whereas national and local government officials were asked about separately in 2005.

Based on such a lack-luster record, it is also not surprising that the public remains decidedly unconvinced about the government's general promise to bring the country's long-standing culture of impunity to an end. Fully 95 percent believed that it was "likely" or "very likely" that the government would be able to enforce the law if "a person like you" committed a serious crime (Table 15). But this figure fell to a mere 27 percent for a top official who does the same, a stunning 68 percent gap. The enforcement gap is higher in Kenya than in any other country except Zimbabwe (the average gap across 18 countries is just 38 percent). A similar gap is evident when respondents were asked what would happen to someone who failed to pay taxes they owed.

³³ These included human rights abuses as well; see Wolf (2006b).

³⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the findings concerning corruption, see Afrobarometer (2006b).

Table 15: Official Impunity

How likely do you think it would be that the authorities could enforce the law if: (percent likely / very likely)	2005
A top government official committed a serious crime	27
A person like you committed a serious crime	95
A top official did not pay a tax on some of the income they earned	28
A person like you did not pay tax on some of the income they earned	92

Crime

Perceptions of the government’s effectiveness in reducing crime have also dropped sharply (Table 16). While our findings suggest little change between 2003 and 2005 in the actual experience of crime, concern about the country’s rampant crime continues to pervade everyday life for many Kenyans. A recent government survey found that 16 percent of all households had experienced crime in the previous year. Only 40 percent of cases were reported to the police, and 62 percent of those who did report to the police were unsatisfied with the response (Republic of Kenya, 2006).

Table 16: Government Handling of Crime

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven’t you heard enough to say? (percent fairly / very well)	2003	2005	difference
Reducing crime	75	56	-19

Presidential Performance

The above indicators focus on Kenyans’ evaluations of government performance with respect to the key components of the NARC coalition platform in 2002. What about the overall evaluations of the performance of key government leaders, especially President Kibaki himself?

After earning some 62 percent of the vote in the 2002 election, an overwhelming 92 percent approved of Kibaki’s performance after his first eight months in office. Once again, the reality check two years later is a hard one: Kibaki’s approval fell by 27 points, to sixty-five percent. Such a level of approval might still be a very respectable figure by global standards, and it would suggest that Kibaki has reason to remain hopeful about his political future. But this is nonetheless a heavy blow on a continent that still tends to defer strongly to the “big man.” His 2005 approval ratings place him just 12th among 18 national leaders – a long fall from the top spot that he held in 2003. One interesting aspect of Kibaki’s presidency, up to the time of the second Afrobarometer survey at least, is the extent to which he has been able to isolate – or insulate – himself from most of his government’s failings. In the popular discourse, the blame has often tended to fall on his subordinates, rather than on him. This may stem in part from his post-election medical problems, which helped to deflect what might otherwise have become much more direct criticism.

Table 17: Leadership Performance

Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past 12 months, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say?	2003	2005	difference
President Kibaki	92	65	-27
Your Member of Parliament	66	39	-27
Your elected Local Government Councilor	64	41	-23

Kenyan MPs also bear the burden for popular disappointment; nor do local government councilors fare especially well. Like the President, both have lost the approval of about one-quarter of Kenyans. But

having started from considerably lower levels in 2003, by 2005 such a drop places them in a much more precarious position, with the approval of well under half of the electorate. By 2005, a significant majority of Kenyans (59 percent) disapproved of their MP's performance, and 54 percent were unhappy with their local government councilors. Blame for poor performance therefore appears to be relatively evenly distributed across all levels of Kibaki's government. But, because Kibaki has (so far) been less visibly involved in the day-to-day management of government affairs, he still retains a much more solid base of support around the country than do other political leaders.

ANALYSIS: DECOMPOSING SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY

We have seen that steep declines in Kenyans' assessments of their political system and its performance between 2003 and 2005 are by no means limited to satisfaction with democracy. In fact, almost all indicators – of system support, system function, and incumbent performance – are more negative in 2005 than in 2003. But the magnitude of the changes varies widely. With regard to system support, support for democracy is down only slightly, while support for the country's constitution has plummeted. Similarly, reviewing system function, we observed only small declines in indicators of basic political freedoms (speech, association, voting), but perceptions of the extent of equality have fallen significantly. Ratings of the government's day-to-day performance on key popular issues are also highly variable, with small declines on education performance contrasted with the unprecedented 45-point crash on anti-corruption efforts.

We now turn to the links between these various factors and satisfaction with democracy. Analysis is conducted using ordinary least squares regression, with satisfaction with democracy as the dependent variable. As shown in Table 18, we have selected independent variables from each of the three categories of explanatory factors outlined above, along with key socio-economic indicators. *System Support* is tested using support for democracy generally, support for multiparty competition more specifically, and support for the constitution. *System Function* is tested using an index of political freedoms comprised of the findings regarding the three central freedoms – speech, association and voting³⁵ – along with equality. And *Incumbent Performance* is tested using measures of the government's handling of several key issues – education, management of the economy and job creation, corruption, and crime – as well as indicators of the level of corruption in the office of the president, and presidential performance. Although it perhaps reflects elements of system function as well, the government's handling of the constitutional reform issue is also treated as an incumbent performance variable, given the central importance that the reform process took on in the country's day-to-day political life during the first two years of the Kibaki administration.

As shown in Table 18, we ran this model three times, first using only 2005 data (Model 1), then the 2003 data (Model 2), and finally a combined data set (Model 3). The only difference between the models is that government handling of the constitution was only included in the 2005 survey, so this variable is included in Model 1, but not in Models 2 or 3. We will briefly review the findings of each of these models in turn.

Explaining Satisfaction with Democracy in 2005

A review of the findings for Model 1 reveals some perhaps surprising findings. Most notably, while the basic socio-economic indicators appear to have some explanatory power when taken alone (adjusted block R square of .065), in the full model shown here they have *none*. Not one of these variables retains significance when system support, system function, and incumbent performance are taken into account. This is particularly noteworthy with respect to ethnicity. Note, however, that several of the other explanatory variables – e.g., assessments of the constitution and the reform process, as well as evaluations

³⁵ One factor was extracted with an Eigenvalue of 2.09 that explained 70% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha=.782.

of equality – also display notable differences across ethnic groups. So the fact that ethnicity does not play a direct role in this model does not necessarily mean that it has “dropped away” entirely as an important component of the understanding of satisfaction with democracy. Instead, it is manifest in differing levels of system support, assessments of system function, and evaluations of government performance.

System support does have some explanatory power. The more an individual supports democracy, the more likely he or she is to be satisfied with it as well. And support for the constitution also plays a roughly equal role. The declining support for democracy and, to a much greater extent, for the constitution between 2003 and 2005 therefore did have some part in the observed decline in satisfaction with democracy. However, the overall contribution of these factors to determining satisfaction with democracy is quite small; they explain at most only about 3 percent of the variation in this measure (adjusted block R square of .031).

The lack of significance of support for multiparty competition is also an important finding of the model. As discussed, Kenyans, like many other Africans interviewed by the Afrobarometer, retain some ambivalence about the value of political pluralism *per se*. The value of having real choices, when contrasted with the costs of the political – and sometimes violent – conflict that result, is not always seen as an unequivocal good. But this uncertainty about the value of more vibrant political competition does not play a significant role in Kenyans’ assessments of how satisfied they are with the practice of democracy. In other words, their concerns about the negative effects of competition may be on the rise, but this has not decreased their overall satisfaction with the present political system.

Turning to system function, it is evident that when evaluating their satisfaction with democracy, Kenyans place more weight on the *outputs* of the country’s democratic institutions and practices. It is not good enough to have democratic institutions on the books; they want to see the tangible impacts of those institutions on their lives. In particular, Kenyans expect to actually enjoy the democratic promise of greater political freedoms; if they don’t, their satisfaction with their political system will suffer. But even more important is the evidence of the strong public desire for equality – the most powerful explanatory factor in the model. In a society widely seen as deeply divided, particularly along regional-ethnic lines, this is a startling and important finding. It suggests that the greatest hope that Kenyans have for a democratic political system in their country is that it will help them to leave the inequalities and discriminatory practices of the past behind them. And while this desire may in part be self-serving – we saw that an average of 32 percent think that their own ethnic group is often or always treated unfairly – it may go well beyond this. As noted, far more Kenyans (54 percent) express concerns about unequal treatment of people generally, suggesting that they desire and value equality not only for themselves, but for all groups in society.

Finally, we can also see that in addition to greater enjoyment of equality and rights, Kenyans also want to see an effective government as a key output of a democratic system. If democracy is to prove a satisfactory system, the elected governments it produces must be able to fulfill at least some of their promises to society.

But not all promises are treated equally. Unfortunately for the Kenyan government, in fact, Kenyans pay little attention – at least in terms of their assessments of the outputs of democracy – to the government’s two “success stories”: free primary education and economic gains. Neither plays any role in determining the public’s satisfaction with democracy in 2005. This is perhaps less surprising in the case of the educational system. Although free primary education has been a clear policy choice of the current

government, it may not be one seen as a choice that is strongly linked to democracy *per se*. Moi could have as easily chosen to go this route without opening up political competition at all.³⁶

The finding that economic management does not have an influence is perhaps more surprising. The country's economic decline has been seen as one of the great failures of the last decade of Moi's rule, and it was widely perceived as being either caused, or at least exacerbated, by the insular nature of the political system and the cronyism, corruption, bad decision making and highly-strained relationships with key donors that went with it. Thus, fundamental shifts in economic management seemed to be one of the great promises of democratization and political change. But it is clear that economic factors have no bearing on the public's satisfaction with democracy.³⁷

The government's failure to significantly reign in corruption, on the other hand, has been important. While the handling of the corruption issue is not itself significant, perceptions of corruption in the Office of the President are.³⁸ The plummeting rating of the effectiveness of the anti-corruption fight has thus been a significant feature in the decline in democratic satisfaction among Kenyans.

It is also important to note again the salience of the constitutional issue. We already saw that attitudes toward the existing constitution were a factor in declining satisfaction with democracy. But the government's failure to manage this process effectively and bring about a popular outcome was one of the two strongest factors influencing levels of satisfaction in 2005. In fact, if these two constitutional factors are taken alone (support for the current constitution, and handling of the constitutional reform process), they can explain fully eight percent of the variance in satisfaction with democracy.³⁹

Finally, we see that our non-specific summary indicator of incumbent performance – the rating of presidential performance – also plays a major role in assessments of democratic satisfaction. This confirms Anderson's (2001: 7) prediction that partisanship should play more of a role in evaluations of democracy in a young democracy like Kenya's than in more established systems. In other words, individuals are less likely to make distinctions in these early days of democracy between how they feel about the current government, and how they feel about democracy *per se*. But it is equally clear that satisfaction with democracy is neither a purely ethnic nor a purely partisan evaluation.

All in all, we see that the incumbent performance measures and system function measures between them provide the greatest value in explaining about 17 percent of the variance in satisfaction with democracy, with the former perhaps playing a somewhat larger role.⁴⁰ System support plays a weaker but nonetheless significant part.

Satisfaction with Democracy in 2003, and Over Time

Comparing Model 1 with Models 2 (using 2003 data) and 3 (using the combined data) reveals that the models are fundamentally quite similar, but with some interesting distinctions. In general, the same

³⁶ Also note that given the very high approval rating for government handling of educational needs in 2005 (85 percent), this variable may be insignificant in part because there is so little variation. However, as discussed below, in 2003, when there was 94 percent approval and hence even less variation, the factor is significant.

³⁷ In addition to the economic variables tested in the models shown here, separate tests have shown that none of our economic indicators, including ratings of the past, present and/or future of either the national economy or an individual's own economic situation, had any bearing on satisfaction with democracy in 2005.

³⁸ And these two variables are closely linked (Pearson's $r = -.374^{**}$). If corruption of the president is dropped from the model, then handling of corruption does become significant; the model adjusted R square drops only slightly to .168.

³⁹ The adjusted block R square for a block consisting only of two variables, support for the constitution and government handling of constitutional reform yields an adjusted block R square of .082 (not shown).

⁴⁰ Adjusted block R square for incumbent performance is .135, compared to .097 for system function.

variables that proved to be significant in Model 1 are also significant in Models 2 and 3.⁴¹ But we can see that when 2003 data are taken alone, several other factors also prove to be significant. Most notably, with regard to incumbent performance, we see that both the government's economic management and its handling of crime are important factors in public assessments of the most important outputs of a democratic system. The reason for the difference between Model 1 and Model 2 in this regard is fairly simple to explain: in 2005, the survey was conducted near the culmination of the long and ultimately very unsatisfying constitutional reform process. The intense public focus on this process dominated public assessments in 2005, overwhelming what are otherwise, in more "normal" times, very important factors with regard to public satisfaction with democracy: the economy and crime. The fact that both factors, as well as job creation, also proved to be highly significant in the combined model confirms their general importance, even if the constitutional reform process overrode them as considerations during 2005.

The other notable changes among the models relate to socio-economic influences. Recall that there were none that were significant in Model 1. However, in 2003, and in the combined model, education does play a significant, and negative, role. More educated Kenyans are apparently inclined to have higher expectations and be more critical in their assessments of democratic performance on the part of society and the government. It would appear, however, that dissatisfaction on multiple fronts became so widespread in 2005 that it was no longer only the educated who turned a critical eye on the system. This factor remains significant in the combined model. Poverty also played a role in 2003 – with the more impoverished rating democracy less approvingly – but it does not carry over into the combined model.

Finally, we note some changes in the sign and significance of ethnic dummy variables. In 2003, the Luo ethnic group – who stood perhaps to gain the most (i.e., they had been promised the prime ministerial post) from the *expected* constitution reform – were notably more satisfied with the benefits of democracy than average. What is perhaps surprising is that the sign for Luos remained positive in 2005 (although not significant) despite the dashing of those aspirations. We also briefly make note of several groups for which the sign (although not the significance) of their coefficient changed between 2003 and 2005. In 2003, the Kamba, the pastoralists, and the collective "others" group were all inclined to be more satisfied with the democratic system. But by 2005, it is among these same groups where we saw the greatest declines in satisfaction, and the signs of their coefficients become negative. As suggested earlier, all are relatively marginalized and peripheral groups that might have had especially unreasonable hopes that their lot would change under the opening political system, only to find that in reality, little had changed for them.

SUMMARY: WHAT DO WE NOW KNOW ABOUT SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY, AND WHY DO WE CARE?

Overall, these findings indicate that satisfaction with democracy does indeed function as a summary indicator, combining assessments of system support (to a lesser extent) with indicators of system function and incumbent performance (to a greater extent). But Canache, et al. (2001), disparage it on this account, while Anderson (2001) argues that there is nothing wrong with a summary indicator of this sort, and that it can in fact be quite useful. What does our assessment tell us of whether or not satisfaction with democracy has a useful story to tell in Kenya?

The unequivocal answer is yes: satisfaction with democracy is a useful indicator in the Kenyan case, particularly once we take the time to decompose it and find out what it is telling us. Because perhaps more clearly than any other indicator, it tells us what Kenyans really hope to gain from democracy. There have been ongoing debates about what democracy means to Africans, and to Kenyans, particularly

⁴¹ Recall that handling of constitutional reform is excluded from these two models.

concerning whether it is perceived as primarily an “intrinsic” good or an “instrumental” one (Bratton and Mattes, 2001). We have had various ways to assess this over the three rounds of Afrobarometer surveys, asking, for example, about the meaning of democracy, or about what the “essential features” of democracy are. But this analysis lays out the reality quite clearly.

In particular, it is evident that Kenyans expect not only “the right institutions” from democracy – although these are important. They also want *outputs*. But what kind of outputs – instrumental outputs that provide direct, socio-economic benefits in their daily lives, or outputs of more intrinsic, political value: the freedom to speak their minds, worship as they choose, do as they please? The answer is unequivocally *both*. Over the long term, Kenyans expect democracy to bring them a better future in quite concrete ways, via better leaders who can produce a more successful economy with less corruption and more security. But they also demand “higher” things from democracy: rights, freedoms, and, most importantly in Kenya’s case, greater equality. Our analysis of satisfaction with democracy reveals that, in a society that has long seemed mired in ethnic competition and divisions, equality is the good that the public most aspires to, and which they most look to democracy to deliver.

We have thus found satisfaction with democracy to be not only useful, but an especially revealing indicator. In Kenya’s young democracy, where the very meaning of democracy and how it can serve the interests of society at large are still only partly understood, what the concept means and what hopes people have for it remain both uncertain and contested. Understanding how Kenyans come to their individual assessments of democratic satisfaction therefore opens a new window onto the question of what, first and foremost, they really hope democracy will do for them and their country. It helps us to identify which of the numerous “promises” of democracy – either intrinsic, instrumental, or both – they value most highly. Thus, in arguing that we should abandon satisfaction with democracy as an indicator in part because it is linked to people’s varying hopes and values concerning their political system, Canache, *et al.*, have overlooked one of the key *strengths* of this indicator. People can and should rate their democracies according to their own understandings, values, hopes and expectations. The satisfaction with democracy indicator can help us to look inside those understandings and explore Kenyans’ aspirations for their own political future.

Table 18: Explaining Satisfaction with Democracy

	Model 1 2005 Data		Model 2 2003 Data		Model 3 Combined	
	Beta	Adj. Block R square	Beta	Adj. Block R square	Beta	Adj. Block R square
Constant	(1.103)		(1.020)		(1.126)	
Socioeconomic		.065		.020		.035
Rural	.030		.022		.023	
Female	-.037		-.018		-.022	
Age	.029		.008		.015	
Education	-.010		-.082***		-.064***	
Lived poverty	-.009		-.047*		-.029	
Kalenjin (excluded)						
Kamba	-.055		.008		-.017	
Kikuyu	-.080		-.020		-.041	
Kisii	.018		.023		.022	
Luhya	-.061		-.021		-.032	
Luo	.073		.082**		.080***	
Meru	-.028		-.044		-.035	
Pastoralist	-.027		.029		.002	
Other	-.074		.017		-.012	
System Support		.031		.052		.061
Support for democracy	.073**		.069***		.065***	
Support for multiple parties	-.017		.015		.004	
Support for constitution	.074**		.109***		.101***	
System Function		.097		.062		.104
Index of political freedoms	.065*		.051**		.062***	
Equal treatment	.115***		.101***		.114***	
Incumbent Performance		.135		.086		.151
Handle education	.011		.007		.009	
Handle corruption	.059		.043*		.053**	
Corruption in Office of Pres.	-.081**		-.036		-.053***	
Handle managing economy	.034		.100***		.082***	
Handle creating jobs	.027		.043		.052**	
Handle crime	.005		.075***		.045**	
Handle constitution reform	.115***		--		--	
Performance of president	.101**		.081***		.102***	
Round 3 dummy					-.034	
Adjusted R square	.173		.139		.200	

Cell values are standardized regression coefficients, i.e. beta.
(Values in parentheses are unstandardized regression coefficients)

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