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**CORRUPTION, GOVERNANCE  
PERFORMANCE AND POLITICAL  
TRUST IN NIGERIA**

Etannibi Alemika

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# Corruption, Governance Performance and Political Trust in Nigeria

## Abstract

*This paper analyses Nigerian citizen perception of (a) democracy and the economy; (b) the performance of their civilian government, and (c) extent of corruption in public institutions and by elected officials and public officers. It also examines the effects of corruption and governance performance on the approval of and trust in Nigeria's political institutions. The analysis is based on the round 2 version of the Afrobarometer survey and employs descriptive analysis, factor analysis, scale item reliability analysis as well as OLS multiple regression analysis. Key findings show that one-half of the respondents preferred a market economy while a third preferred a government-run economic system. More than two thirds preferred democratic governance, while more than one-half agreed that the national constitution expresses the values and hopes of the Nigerian people. Generally, findings show that trust in public institutions is low and that political approval and trust are primarily influenced by how government performs in the arenas of socio-economic management and civil rights protection.*

## 1. Introduction

Nigeria has experienced a protracted multidimensional crisis during the past two decades in the form of various economic, political and social problems. Some manifestations of the crisis of the state and governance in the country are (a) inability to guarantee a basic minimum standard of living that accord with human dignity for the majority of the citizens – two-thirds of Nigerians live below the poverty line; (b) lingering conditions of political instability, repression and violence; (c) widespread petty and grand corruption; (d) economic decline resulting in capacity under-utilisation, structural distortion (neglect of agriculture and consequent food insecurity, dependence on oil which is not articulated to the domestic economy, growth in the nominal sector - especially banking and financial institutions trading in government funds and foreign exchange, high interest rates that are inimical to industrial development and growth), huge debt burden; (e) very high unemployment rate, especially among young people in the 18-35 years age bracket who presently constitute nearly a third of the population; (f) deterioration of socio-economic infrastructure (especially power, road and rail transportation); (g) widening

inequality among individuals and between rural and urban communities; (h) insecurity of lives and property due to violent crimes and socio-political violence engendered by competition over resources, and (i) deterioration of the social services – particularly education and health care, which has been made worse by structural adjustment programmes implemented by successive governments since 1986. In a substantive sense, Nigeria suffers from state failure to guarantee every citizen the right to economic, social, and political security and inclusiveness. These problems are often attributed to the protracted period of military rule and economic mismanagement. But governance failures could also be observed under three different civilian regimes since independence (i.e. 1960-66; 1979-1983 and the period since 1999).

In 1999, an elected government, led by Olusegun Obasanjo – a retired army general and former military head of state (1976-1979), assumed power after 16 years of military rule characterised by a high level of corruption, widespread repression, and very serious declines in the economic productivity and opportunities in the country. But after five years of civil rule and democratic transition, many of the inherited socio-political and economic problems are worsening. In essence, five years of civil rule has not produced the socioeconomic dividends that are expected by citizens and this has created tension in the polity. As a result, there has been increasing dissatisfaction with the performance of the government, and the trust of citizens in various organs of government has also declined over the past three years. From a development perspective, the pertinent question is to what extent is the performance of government related to trust in political institutions?

Corruption is a serious problem in the country. It is widespread and is increasingly being tolerated by the public. Corruption in the country seems to have acquired immunity against various political and legal measures aimed at its control. The problem is stifling economic development, eroding public bureaucratic efficacy, widening inequality, and undermining the creation of opportunities and delivery of social services for the citizens, especially those who are socially, economically and politically disadvantaged. In this context, the government is regarded as insensitive and unresponsive to the needs of citizens. This also contributes to the loss of confidence in government by the citizens. Several laws and institutions have been created by the country's successive governments to control corrupt practices. But rather than abating, corrupt practices have become endemic even within the police and other corruption control organisations. The ineffectiveness of such agencies engendered cynicism among citizens as well as impunity among the rulers and officials of government and private enterprises involved in diverse corrupt practices.

## 2. Focus of the Study

Social science literature shows that corruption and governance performance have implications for citizens' confidence and trust in their government (Anderson and Tverdova 2003). However, the extent of the effects of corruption and governance performance on political trust has to be examined empirically in different societies, as contextual factors may either aggravate or mitigate the relationships among the factors. There has been no empirical study of the effects of corruption and governance performance on political trust among social scientists in Nigeria, in spite of widespread concern about the issues. This study examines the extent of trust in political institutions in the country, and the extent to which political trust is determined by governance performance and corruption, among other factors. More specifically, the study analyses:

1. Perceptions of governance performance – improvement or deterioration in economic and social conditions, and the handling of social, political and economic issues and concerns by the government;
2. Perceptions of level of official corruption in the country's political institutions;
3. The extent of trust in political institutions in Nigeria;
4. The effect of corruption and governance performance on trust in Nigeria's political institutions;
5. These analyses address perceptions of corruption, governance performance and citizens' response in term of approval of and trust in political institutions.

## 3. Data and Analytical Methods

The data for this study were obtained from Nigeria, the most populous African country with an estimated population of 130 million in 2004<sup>1</sup>. Nigeria occupies a large land mass of 923,768 square kilometres with vegetation ranging from mangrove swamp in the Niger Delta creeks, to tropical rain forest in the south, grassland in the central region and Sahel savanna and semi arid land in the far north. The country is a federal state made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital

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<sup>1</sup> The last census was conducted in 1991. The country's population then was 88,992,200, of whom 49.97 were females. In 1991, 64 per cent of the population lived in the rural areas, although more recent estimates put the urban/rural ratio at 40/60.

Territory, Abuja. It also consists of nearly four hundred ethnic and linguistic groups amalgamated into a single political entity through a series of amalgamation of peoples and territories between 1861 and 1914 by the British imperialist government.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1. Data Collection

The data for this study were obtained from the round 2 survey of the *Afrobarometer* in Nigeria conducted in October 2003<sup>3</sup>. Data were collected through interviews of a representative sample of adult population (those eighteen years and older) in each of the countries based on a multi-stage, stratified, clustered sampling approach. A total of 2,428 respondents were interviewed. Twenty-nine of the country's 36 states across the six informal geopolitical zones were covered. The 2003 Survey was administered by the Afrobarometer research network in collaboration with Management Systems International, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development. A private social survey company based in Lagos – Research and Marketing Services – conducted the fieldwork and processed questionnaire data. Several Afrobarometer research network associates<sup>4</sup> directed the survey design and implementation.

The survey questionnaire consisted of many questions designed to tap citizens' perceptions of economic, social, and political conditions and developments; attitudes toward democracy and free market; perceptions of government performance in handling economic, political and social issues, and perceptions of conditions under the present system of civilian government compared to military rule<sup>5</sup>. The gender and urban/rural distribution of the sample were as follows: 50:50 (male/female); 49:51 (rural urban).

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<sup>2</sup> Otite (1990) estimated 387 while Federal Office of Statistics enumerated 354.

<sup>3</sup> The Afrobarometer is an independent, nonpartisan research project that measures the social, political and economic atmosphere in Africa. Afrobarometer surveys are conducted in more than a dozen African countries and are repeated on a regular cycle. Because the instrument asks a standard set of questions, countries can be systematically compared. Trends in public attitudes are tracked over time. The aims and publications of the network can be accessed at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

<sup>4</sup> The associates on the projects were Peter Lewis, Etannibi Alemika, Mike Bratton and Derek Yul Davids.

<sup>5</sup> The protocol of sampling and the questionnaire for Afrobarometer survey are available on the network's web ([www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org)).



## 3.2 Methods of Analysis

Several statistical analytical techniques were employed. They range from descriptive analysis (frequencies, percentages and means), factor analysis, scale item reliability analysis and correlation to multiple (OLS) regression. Details of the analytical procedures used in the analysis are described later in the relevant sections.

## 4. Theoretical and Empirical Literature

The literature and research on political trust have grown very rapidly during the past two decades. Most of the works on political trust were undertaken by political scientists. Similarly, there has been tremendous growth of literature on corruption in Nigeria since the early 1960s. Scholars and researchers across various disciplines, especially sociology, criminology, political science and economics have contributed to the literature on that subject. Naturally, corruption has been defined from the different perspectives of the various disciplines. In this section, the literature on corruption, governance performance and political trust are reviewed as background to the present work.

### 4.1 Corruption

There are several definitions of corruption in the literature, each of which emphasises different aspects of the phenomenon (Alemika 2002, 2003). The *Dictionary of Social Sciences* (1964: 142) defines corruption as ‘the use of ... power for ... profit, preferment, or prestige, or for the benefit of a group or class, in a way that constitutes a breach of law or of standards of high moral conduct’. This definition is one of the few comprehensive descriptions of the concept and its manifestations. Khan’s definition of corruption as “... behaviour which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power or status”, points to the nature of the conduct and the underlying motives (Khan 1996: 12). These definitions highlight the elements of bribery (financial gains) and abuse of office (for non-financial gains) in corruption.

Many definitions of corruption sometimes equate the conduct with bribery. For example, Webster Third International Dictionary (1960) defines corruption as ‘a price, reward, gift or favour bestowed or promised with a view to pervert judgment or corrupt the conduct especially of a person in a position of trust’.

This definition is similar to that offered by Kong, who defined corruption as “the extraction and acceptance of payment from private entities (be they individual citizens or businesses) by public officials, and the private misappropriation and abuse of public funds” (Kong 1996:49). Similarly, Dey (1989:503-504) defined corruption as “any act undertaken with the deliberate intent of deriving or extracting monetary or other benefits by encouraging or conniving at illegal activities”. All these definitions focus on bribery. Some other definitions direct attention to the nature and effects of corruption. Friedrich (1966) defines corruption in term of transaction or exchange between corrupters and corruptees. He observes that:

‘... corruption can be said to exist whenever a powerholder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e., who is a responsible functionary or officeholder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favor whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public interests’ (Friedrich 1966:74).

Bribery is only one form of a corrupt act. Another common form of corruption in the context of Nigeria is nepotism in relation to appointment, promotion or favour, or award of contracts to kinsmen, friends and associates that is widespread in the public sector and private enterprises in violation of subsisting rules. Corruption, therefore may involve three distinct but occasionally conjoint actions: bribery, nepotism and fraud (embezzlement, inflation of costs of services, and forgery).

The extent, pattern and trend of corruption are determined by the political and socio-economic conditions in society. Several factors have been identified as causes of corruption in Africa: colonial social structure (Ekeh 1975) and neo-colonialism (Zack-Williams and Alemika 1986).<sup>6</sup> Some writers such as Smith 1964; McMullan 1961; Scott 1969; Leys 1965, explained corruption in Africa as a product of traditional practices of gift-giving<sup>7</sup>, But this is a gross Eurocentric misrepresentation. The traditional culture of gift-giving represents symbolic

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<sup>6</sup> There were several corruption scandals and probes during the colonial rule. The scandals were exposed in the administration of colonial administrative machineries. See for example, Bernard Storey (1953) *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of the Lagos Town Council* Lagos: Government Printer, and E. W. J. Nicholson (1956) *Report of the Commission of inquiry into the Administration of Ibadan District Council*. Ibadan: Government of Western Region.

<sup>7</sup> These writers assume that corruption is absent in Europe and North America or that explanations of corruption in Africa must be entirely different from those for the Euro-American nations, and rooted in culture rather than the operation of the economic and political structures. But widespread political and economic corruption have been reported and explained in the West (see the *Newsweek* of April 29, 2002) without recourse to tradition or culture.

exchange of goodwill and such gifts were publicly presented. It was not a means of property accumulation. It is akin to diplomatic exchange of gifts between host and visiting heads of state in present times.

Ekeh (1975), in his seminal explanation of corruption in Africa, traced the phenomenon to the impact of colonial rule on the Nigerian social structure and the multiple and contradictory expectations from individuals by the primordial public and the civic public. The primordial public is constituted by the categorical identities of ethnicity and religion, while the civic public is the public realm of official bureaucracy. According to Ekeh (1994),

‘corruption gathers strength in Africa, and has expanded in scope, because it is widely accepted that the use of civic public office and funds for the benefit of one’s primordial grouping is legitimate’ (Ekeh 1994: 245).

Several scholars have attempted to explain corruption in terms of an array of political and economic conditions like patrimonialism, clientelism, and prebendalism. Richard Joseph (1979) argues that:

‘clientelism and prebendalism are two fundamental principles of political organization and behavior in Nigeria. An individual seeks the support and protection of an oga or a “godfather,” while trying to acquire the basic social and material goods, - loans, scholarships, licenses, plots of urban land, employment, promotion - and the main resource of the patron in meeting these requests is quite literally a piece of the state ... One way of seeing the extensive corruption in Nigeria is as constituting part of the economic assurance of office...’ (Joseph 1979: 56-58).

Professor Joseph also highlighted the intricate relationships between prebendalism and clientelism, noting that:

‘The existence of a prebendalized state, and the easy adaptation of traditional patron-client relationships to the pursuit of modern material goods, means that these two features of the system - prebendalism and clientelism - are mutually reinforcing. To obtain and keep clients, one must gain a prebendal office; and to be sure that in the distribution of prebendal offices an individual or his kin have a reasonable chance of procuring one, clients must be gathered together to make their collective claims as well as to prove that the aspirant patron (or potential holder of a prebendal office) is a person of consequence whose co-optation would be rewarding to the “political entrepreneurs”’ (*ibid*).

Rather than interpreting the argument of clientelism and prebendalism as cultural products, it is better to understand it in relation to the process of the composition of the colonial states in Africa and the ethnicisation of the relationship between groups by the colonisers in order to divide and rule the colonised (Mamdani 1996). This bred ethno-religious cleavages and competitions for state resources. Political entrepreneurs develop among the respective groups as representatives in the struggle for state resources among the constituent groups and as patrons in relation to their own group. Besides, colonialism created a system of power that was not answerable or accountable to the local community. Hence, the communities or indigenous constituents of the colonial society were not empowered to demand accountability from the colonial rulers or their local allies, including traditional rulers, whose status and functions were transformed by the colonial encounter and accreditation through the indirect rule system (Ekeh 1980; Mamdani 1996). The creation of a political power structure and bureaucratic apparatus that existed outside the reach and control of the mass of the citizenry during colonialism and maintained by post-colonial rulers, contributed to the scale and persistence of corruption in post-colonial Africa.

Several sources or causes of corruption have been articulated in the literature. The particular source or cause of corruption is emphasised by a researcher depends on his/her training and ideological leaning. According to Yves Meny:

‘The causes of corruption are sought in wholly different directions, depending on the ideological stance and preferences of the seeker. The neo-liberal school (which has contributed to the analysis of the phenomenon) considers corruption to be one of the effects of the black market caused by excessive state intervention. The more the state intervenes, the more it legislates, and the more it develops interfering bureaucracies, the greater the risks of parallel procedures and markets spawning unlawful conduct. On the other hand, those who are not convinced of the state’s intrinsic perversity or the market’s unquestionable merits stress another aspect: the erosion of public ethics, the loss of state’s legitimate status as the incarnation of the general interest, and the dilution of communal values through the pursuit of profit and the defence of selfish private interests’ (Yves Meny 1996: 309).

Social science literature has associated corruption with the following problems:

- Loss of revenues of government;
- Loss of government funds through cost-inflation, poor quality services;

- Inequality in service delivery as service provisioning is influenced by either ability to bribe or nepotism or clientelistic relationships with officials;
- Erosion of the rule of law;
- Widening economic and political inequalities;
- Hampering investment and economic growth because it produces additional unproductive costs (Theobald 1990; Seligson 2002; Goldsmith 1999; Alemika 2002; Montinola and Jackman 2002).

However, corruption has not always been considered dysfunctional. Some scholars argued that bribery may serve as ‘speed money’ in an environment characterised by a bureaucratic bottleneck. Corruption may also make it possible for certain groups of people excluded from services to obtain them (Huntington 1968; Nye 1967).

## 4.2 Corruption and Political Trust

Corruption engenders various social, economic and political problems that can erode trust in political institutions (Seligson 2002). For example, Anderson and Tverdova (2003) in their analysis found a strong correlation of high levels of corruption with negative evaluations of the political system as well as low level of trust in public officials. Democratisation is prescribed as a cure for corruption. LeVine (1993) argues that:

‘While administrative corruption cannot be eliminated, it can be limited ... attempts at limitation are more likely to succeed the farther the country is along the democratization path. The more democracy, the more likely that mechanisms will have been put in place to monitor the performance of administrators and bureaucrats’ (LeVine 1993: 271).

However, democratisation may generate some form of corruption in its early phase and thereby erode trust in government (Moran 2001). Democratisation and economic liberalisation in Eastern Europe and Africa have resulted in the weakening and failure of state in relation to delivery of socio-economic goods and services. Moran (2001) observes that:

‘State strength and/or legitimacy is an important correlate with corruption. Where state capacity in the areas of law enforcement/social control is limited in the face of increased social and political freedom, corruption and crime may develop. Where the

state cannot satisfy demands for basic social services, regime legitimacy may decline, leading to petty corruption and crime' (Moran 2001: 389).

Moran further argues that:

'economic reform whose effects create unemployment, poverty, and/or inequality ... may lead to an increase in petty crime and corruption by citizens struggling 'to get by'' (Moran 2001: 387).

In Nigeria, democratic transition and economic liberalisation programmes were introduced simultaneously in 1986/87 by the military regime led by Babangida. The implementation of the liberalisation programme (essentially deregulation of foreign exchange, privatisation, abdication of responsibility in social services provisioning by government, liberalised import regime which favoured dumping of foreign goods) was steered by technocrats, some of whom had prior employment with the IMF or World Bank. However, the democratic transition was manipulated and eventually abandoned while the economic liberalisation that witnessed opposition from several sectors of society, especially among students, workers and professional groups, was implemented with a heavy dose of legal and political repression of its opponents (Olukoshi 1993 Jega 2000; Alemika 1998). The resulting effects have been the aggravation of the country's socio-economic crises such that Nigeria is worse off today than it was before the introduction of economic adjustment in 1986. The present civilian government has redesigned the programme. There has also been constant harassment of the government by IMF and World Bank demanding accelerated implementation of the programme, in spite of widespread opposition from the citizens. As was the case with the implementation of economic liberalisation programmes in the country in the 1980s by the military government, the current civilian government has recruited Nigerian employees of the IMF<sup>8</sup> and World Bank to implement its economic policies. The Obasanjo government has also repressed opposition to aspects of the programme that are considered inimical to the development of the country. Demonstrations and labour opposition to the programme have been subjected to repression in the form of arrest and the, extra-judicial killing of demonstrating labour union members in 2003 and 2004 by the police.

Western governments, the media and scholars are quick to point to the involvement of Nigerian citizens in a variety of non-violent economic crimes in different countries. But what they often ignore or failed/refused to acknowledge is that these activities emerged in response to the deprivations and repression engendered by economic liberalisation that they foisted on the country, from

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<sup>8</sup> The Minister of Finance was appointed from her position with the IMF as a Vice-President.

1986, through the IMF and World Bank and admonitions/threats of advanced capitalist nations. With the impoverishment caused by economic liberalisation, Nigerian intellectuals and professionals in large numbers emigrated to North America and Europe. Hundreds of medical personnel also emigrated to the Middle East, especially, Saudi Arabia. Nigerian students were stranded in Europe and North America because of the sudden devaluation of the currency which made it impossible to pay their fees. Some students resorted to crime, including drug trafficking (Obot 2004) and the popular ‘419’ or advance fee fraud that has been used as a bait to defraud equally criminally-minded Europeans and Americans who wanted to collude and steal public funds from Nigeria. Young Nigerians continue to make desperate efforts also to escape the economic deprivations in the country. One of the effects of the brain drain, caused by the economic liberalisation programme, is the disintegration of economic and social services systems. It is therefore not surprising that 73% of respondents in the *Afrobarometer Survey* conducted in October 2003 said that the economic policy has hurt most people and benefited only a few.

Corruption erodes trust in government because it engenders a condition whereby public goods are only obtained if a citizen has either connections with officials or money, or both (Treisman 2000). High levels of corruption have also been reported as a predictor of diminished support for democracy as well as diminished opposition to undemocratic alternative forms of government (Rose, Rose *et al* 1999; Mishler and Rose 2001). More cogently, Anderson and Tverdova reported that “individuals in countries with higher levels of corruption evaluate the system more negatively ... corruption breeds discontent with the performance of the political system” (2003: 99).

### **4.3 Performance, Democratic Legitimation and Political Trust**

To what extent does performance by the incumbent government influence support for democracy and trust in political institutions? The question can be confusing because citizens relate simultaneously to three interrelated realities – the state, regime and government. Bratton and Mattes (2001: 453, fn. 13) propose that “Regimes are sets of rules, states are sets of institutions, and governments are sets of leaders”. While regimes set structural limits of activities, performance is a product of quality of governance – decision-making and policy formulation/implementation by incumbent governments. Consequently, performance may be understood as either a product of the regime (structure and rules) that govern the nature and scope of permissible policies or a consequence of the policies and actions of government in power. The impact of performance on (a) support for and satisfaction with regime, and (b) trust and

approval of government have received substantial attention in the literature (Weil 1989; Bratton and Mattes 2001; Vassilev 2004; Montero *et al.* 1997; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1999; Weatherford 1992).

One critical area of confusion and disagreement is what constitutes democracy. When people support democracy, what sort of institutional structures, rules, roles, relations and outcomes do they have in mind? It was this problem that formed the focus of the discussion in the paper by Collier and Levitsky (1997), entitled *Democracy with Adjectives*. Hubber *et al* (1997) provided a lucid description of the three popular conception of democracy and the relationship among them as well as associated problems. They identified three forms of democracy – formal, participatory and social democracy. They defined formal democracy as “a political system that combines four features: regular free and fair elections, universal suffrage, accountability of the state’s administrative organs to the elected representatives, and effective guarantees for freedom of expression and association as protection against arbitrary state action” (*Ibid:* 323). They refer to a political system as participatory democracy, if in addition to the four requirements enumerated above, it also ensures “high levels of participation without systematic differences across social categories (for example, class, ethnicity, gender)” (*Ibid:* 324). Finally they defined social democracy as a political system that in addition to the five properties of participatory democracy also embodied “increasing equality in social and economic outcomes” (*Ibid:* 324). In their discussion, therefore, social democracy is the most advanced form of democracy while the formal democracy remains the most elementary. When citizens are asked whether or not they prefer democracy, it is important to question which level of democracy they have in mind when they respond. Equally important is the question of which level of democracy is regarded as legitimate expectations of the citizens by the investigator. Stemming from the cold war ideological divide, liberal political scientists often become defensive when democracy is defined in terms of social democracy (Ake 1996; Bratton and Mattes 2001). But the question of what form of democracy is supported by citizens is often ignored in the discussion of democratic legitimation by mainstream liberal political scientists.

Schumpeter (1975) argued that support for the government in a democratic nation is influenced by its performance in service delivery. According to him, democracy involves competition among parties and political elites who in competitive elections promise to provide services to citizens in return for their votes. If a government is elected but fails to deliver goods and services, its legitimacy will decline. His solution to avoiding legitimation deficit is either to increase government’s capacity to match its promise for service delivery or reduce citizens’ demand. This approach is associated with the notion of ‘revolution of rising expectation or entitlements’ or overload of the political



system by citizens' demand. Others have pointed out that confidence in state institutions represents citizens' perception that the government represents or protects their interests (Weil 1989).

Performance, according to Weil (1989: 686) refers to "state's output of services to the population that assure economic benefits and civil order". Bratton and Mattes (2001) disputed the importance of economic performance in the level of support for regime by citizens. They criticised those authors (Ake 1996; Elster 1993) who emphasise economic performance as a precondition for democratic consolidation. Their criticism is borne out of their ideological preference for a minimalist definition of democracy, limited to delivery of political goods. But there are other definitions of democracy, which they acknowledge (Bratton and Mattes 2001: 451). Performance should not be reduced to the delivery of either economic goods or political goods. In Africa, a holistic performance assessment combining economic and political goods influence approval of and trust in government, as the analysis by Bratton and Mattes showed. But Bratton and Mattes rejected the logic of their robust analysis and result and rather preferred to stick to their *a priori* ideologically-driven or laden preference for formal democracy rather than social democracy that Ake (1996) canvassed<sup>9</sup>. Democracy, properly understood, as Ake (1996) argued, refers to freedom in all domains and is not limited to formal political freedoms, which cannot be fully realised in a society characterised by extreme socio-economic inequalities. Africans interviewed in the 2002/2003 round of *Afrobarometer Survey* reject extremes of capitalism and planned economy (Bratton *et al.* 2004). It is logical to expect that their legitimation of democracy as well as evaluation of government performance will be influenced by their economic regime choices or preferences.

Democratic values and practices are not products of modern European civilization as many anthropological works show (Mair 1962; Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1940). But it is common for some scholars to confuse or reify a concept like democracy constructed in a particular language, especially by native speakers of such language with the principles and practices captures by the language. Thus societies may share principles and practices but differ in their linguistic expression. Such problem can be observed in the statement by Bratton and Mattes that:

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<sup>9</sup> Contrast their results and discussion on pages 465-471, 473 – 474 on demands for both economic and political performance with their strong conclusion on page 474 that their results "counter the economistic arguments that the market will legitimate democracy". They equate market with economy, a very questionable position borne out of their commitment to liberalism with two sides – on one side is formal political freedom emptied of socio-economic equity and on the other capitalism anchored on its wide known virtues and vices of efficiency and exploitation respectively.

‘If the denizens of the world’s poorest continent make ‘separate and correct’ distinctions between ‘a basket of economic goods (which may be deteriorating) and a basket of political goods (which may be improving)’, then citizens everywhere are likely to do so...If democracy is valued by citizens as an end in itself in Africa, then this generalization probably holds good universally’ (*Ibid*: 449).

It is not clear what the expression was intended to convey but it appears to follow the reasoning of colonial anthropology that adopts a unilinear evolutionary category in which European practices reflect civilization and African cultures manifest barbarism or backwardness. Why should Africa’s understanding be the basis to assert that if Africans valued democracy, then others will do so or that if they can separate economic goods from political goods then ‘citizens everywhere are likely to do so’ (*Ibid*: 449)? Anthropologists (including their colonial genre) acknowledge that African societies valued freedom, equity and justice and therefore incorporated check and balances in their institutions (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes, 1940; Mair 1962).

Trust in political institutions and support for regimes are more frequently tapped through social surveys by social scientists. But often, the concepts are hardly fully defined. Trust judgment according to Miller and Listhaug (1990: 358):

‘... reflects evaluations of whether or not political authorities and institutions are performing in accordance with normative expectations held by the public. Citizen expectations of how government should operate include among other criteria, that it be fair, equitable, honest, efficient, and responsive to society’s need. In brief, an expression of trust in government (or synonymously political confidence and support) is a summary judgment that the system is responsive and will do what is right even in the absence of constant scrutiny’ (Miller and Listhaug 1990: 358).

Evaluation of performance in Africa cannot be divorced from the peoples’ experiences with colonial oppression and post-colonial authoritarianism. Shivji (1990: 383) observes that the colonial governments in Africa were despotic. According to him:

‘Its legal order was exactly the opposite of that prescribed by constitutionalism. Power was concentrated in the executive, usually in the person of governor, while justice was dispensed by an administrator, often a district commissioner. The legislature, if one existed at all, was packed by the governor’s appointees while fundamental human rights, particularly those which might have had any political impact, were conspicuous by their absence ... Forced

labour and unlimited power of arrest by administrators completed the armoury of an essentially quasi-military colonial state’.

‘The deeper structures of the colonial political and legal order were inherited or, in some cases, reorganized to reinforce despotism in the post-independence period. The constitutional order established at independence was therefore, as it were, an excrescence. Through amendment, modifications or overthrow, constitutions soon came to correspond to the overall legal order’ (Shivji 1990: 383).

African successor governments have also adopted repression as instrument of governance. It is therefore understandable if Africans emphasise the civil rights components of democracy. But nonetheless also demand delivery of economic goods (Ake 1978, 1996; Bratton and Mattes 2001).

## **5. Analysis**

### **5.1 Political Economy, Official Corruption, Regime Performance and Political Trust**

The extent of official corruption, regime performance and political trust are influenced by the political and economic structure of society and embedded social relations. To understand public perception of official corruption and performance by the incumbent government as well as their trust in the nation’s core political institutions, it is necessary to examine the attitudes of the citizens toward the nation’s political economy. The first part of this analytical section examines attitudes toward political and economic systems, extent of expressed preferences for democracy and free market economic system. It also analyses the perceptions of official corruption and performance by government in 2003 relative to the results obtained in the survey conducted in the country by Afrobarometer in 2001.

#### **5.1.1 Attitudes Toward Democracy and the Nigerian Constitution**

What are the preferences of Nigerian citizens in respect of political system for the nation? Results of our analysis of the *Afrobarometer Survey* conducted in October 2003 show that more than two-thirds (68%) of Nigerian respondents

prefer democracy to non-democratic systems of government. The decline in preference for democracy between 2001 and 2003 was marginal (table 1). However, more than three-fifths of Nigerians were dissatisfied with the way democracy works or is practiced in their country.

*Table 1: Attitudes to Democracy and National Constitution*

<i>Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?</i>	<i>2001 %</i>	<i>2003 %</i>
A. Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.	71	68
B. In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable	15	20
C. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have	12	11
• Don't know	2	2
<i>Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Nigeria?</i>		
• Very satisfied	12	6
• Fairly satisfied	45	29
• Not very satisfied	31	31
• Not at all satisfied	11	31
• Not a democracy	1	2
• Don't know	2	2
<i>Do you disagree or agree with the statement that 'Our constitution expresses the values and hopes of the Nigerian people?'</i>		
• Strongly disagree/Disagree	22	23
• Neither agree nor disagree	14	15
• Agree/Strongly agree	56	56
• Don't know	9	6
<i>Which of the following statement is closest to your view: A or B?</i>		
A. Democracy is worth having simply because it allows everyone a free and equal voice in making decisions	52	56
B. Democracy is only worth having if it can address everyone's basic economic needs	43	41
• Do not agree with either	4	1
• Don't know	1	2

*Note:* Due to rounding-up, total percentage do not always add to 100.

Nigerians embrace democracy as an instrument of promoting both political liberties and economic wellbeing. Thus, minimal democracy in terms of election and civic liberties alone (the hallmark of liberal democracy) will not meet the aspirations of Nigerians (Ake 1996, 2000) and probably accounts for the apparent gap between preference for and satisfaction with democracy in the

country (table 1). Democratic legitimation is not based on either intrinsic values *or* instrumental values (Bratton and Mattes, 2001) but on both.

The constitution of a country is its primary law that define the juridical structure and powers of the state; functions of government, rights and duties of citizens. Since 1999, when the present Constitution came into effect, there has been clamour for its review. Proponents of its review through either sovereign national conference or constitutional conference argue that it was promulgated by the military regime and therefore does not meet the aspirations of the citizens in a democratic federal state. But there are those who believe that the 1999 Constitution is largely a review of the 1979 Constitution that was applicable during the Second Republic (1979-1983) before it was suspended by the military junta that seized power on December 31, 1983. People in this group argue that the constitution be allowed to grow through judicial review. In view of the raging controversy over the constitution, it is important to understand to what extent Nigerians accepted the constitution as expression of their values and hopes. The majority of the respondents (56%) said that the constitution expresses the values and hope of the people of the country against 23% who thought that it does not (table 1). Significantly, the responses to the question were virtually similar in the 2001 and 2003 surveys.

### **5.1.2 Attitudes Toward Economic Systems and Government's Economic Policies**

During the early years of independence from British colonial rule, successive Nigerian governments promoted what was called a 'mixed economic' system. This entailed an active government involvement in and regulation of the economy to achieve rapid development, along with private competitive entrepreneurship. As a result, the governments at the national and regional levels established and ran several economic enterprises while also expanding those it inherited from the colonial authority (e.g. Agricultural marketing boards, railways, telecommunications, banks, electricity; the textile industry, etc. which served as an instrument of colonial exploitation and control). The high involvement of government in the economy was justified with reference to the need to promote balanced development across economic sectors and regions; and also for government to mobilise and invest resources required for the rapid development of the economy and socioeconomic infrastructure – resources which cannot be generated by the population given the high level of poverty, inadequate technical and entrepreneurial skill. Nigeria's first and second development plans 1962 -74 pointedly adopted the mixed economy system and import substitution industrialisation strategy. The introduction of the Indigenisation Programme – that limited foreign control (ownership of

enterprises) of the economy - in the 1970s further extended the involvement of government in the economy.

Historically, therefore, the involvement of government in the economy as both investor and regulator started during the colonial era and expanded in the first two and a half decades of independence. In 1986, the military government led by General Ibrahim Babangida, on advice (or harassment?) from the IMF, World Bank and foreign creditor, introduced a structural adjustment programme. Some of the most critical components of the programme were commitment to liberalisation, privatisation of public enterprises, commercialisation of social services and public utilities (especially education and health care) and downsizing of the public service, and market determined foreign exchange rates (Olukoshi 1993; Ihonvbere 1991; Onimode 1988; Alemika 1998). Several groups resisted the programme on various grounds: imposition by imperialist institutions; its illogicality given that Nigeria had nothing to sell in the international arena beyond oil and devaluation would only have made imported goods expensive without alternative local substitutes, authoritarianism which its implementation engendered. The government heavily repressed the various groups that were opposed to the programme (Alemika 1998; Jega 2000).

The programme which has been implemented for the past two decades with varying commitment by successive governments has been held responsible for the mass impoverishment of Nigerian people, the decay of infrastructure and social services (particularly education, health care). The privatised enterprises, where they have not ceased to exist, have not demonstrated greater efficiency than when they were publicly owned. Only the privatised bank remained profitable, though their impact on Nigerian economy is questionable. Overall, the transition to 'free-racketeering' capitalism favoured by IMF, World Bank and 'Creditor' nations have unleashed social, economic and political tragedies on the country (Alemika 1998, Jega 2000).

In the context of the experience of the adjustment programme, what are the preferences of Nigerians regarding an economic system for their country? Fifty percent of the respondents preferred a free market economy while a third preferred an economy run by the government – a pattern of response that points toward a mixed economy policy approach and choice for the country. Very significant is the fact that two-thirds of the Nigerian respondents were dissatisfied with government's reduced role in the economy (table 2).

**Table 2: Attitudes Toward Economic Systems and Government Economic Policies**

<i>Which of the following three statements is closest to your own opinion?</i>	2001 %	2003 %
A. A free market economy is preferable to an economy run by the government	54	50
B. A government-run economy is preferable to a free market economy	27	33
C. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of economic system we have.	16	13
<i>As you may know, the government has reduced its role in the economy. Overall, how satisfied are you with the way this policy works?</i>		
• Very satisfied	11	5
• Fairly satisfied	40	29
• Not very satisfied	26	28
• Not at all satisfied	16	31
• Government has not reduced its role	2	3
• Don't know	5	4
<i>Which of the following statements is closest to your view: A or B?</i>		
A. The government's economic policies have helped most people, only a few have suffered.	23	24
B. The government's economic policies have hurt most people and only a few have benefited.	72	73
• Do not agree with either	3	2
• Don't know	2	1

A large majority (73%) of the respondents said that the liberalisation and privatisation programmes have hurt most people and benefited only a few. The overall implication is that Nigerians do not support the liberalisation programmes, understandably, that have engendered serious economic and social decline in the country (Jega 2000; Alemika 1998).

### **5.1.3 Economic and Political Systems' Preferences and Democratic Legitimation**

Are there relationships between preference for democracy and preference for market economy? Result of our contingency analysis in table 3 show that a significant relation does exist. Those who preferred a market economy were also more likely to prefer a democratic system of governance. Conversely, individuals who were willing to accommodate non-democratic government in certain circumstances were also more likely to prefer a government-run

economy. However, the majority of both groups – market and planned economy advocates – actually prefer democracy.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3: Economic and Political Systems' Preferences**

Economic system preference	Political system preference	
	Non-democratic alternatives	Democracy
Government-run economy	28.5 (207)	71.5 (519)
Free market economy	16.8 (184)	83.2 (91.3)
$X^2 = 35.7; df = 1; p < .01$		

The result is understandable because over the past two decades, transition to civil rule programmes in the country have been implemented along with liberalisation, privatisation and commercialisation policies. Thus, transitions to civil rule and market economy have been pursued contemporaneously. This tends to complicate and engender opposition to the implementation of the economic programmes. In response, the government either modifies aspects of the economic policy or intensifies repression of opposition, thereby undermining democratic consolidation (Przeworski 1991).

**Table 4: Legitimation of Democracy and Economic System Preference**

Legitimation of Democracy	Economic system preference	
	Government-run economy	Free market economy
Economic goods	44.7 (364)	55.3 (450)
Political goods	36.8 (430)	63.2 (738)
$X^2 = 12.5; df = 1; p, .01$		

What are the factors that legitimise or consolidate democracy in transitional countries? Are they socio-economic performance (improving social and economic well-being of citizens) or political performance variables (recognising and protecting human rights, rule of law, ensuring free and fair elections)? Or both? Ake (1996) argued that political or formal democracy is grossly

<sup>10</sup> The framing of the question does not distinguish in exclusive terms those who prefer democracy and those who chose non-democratic alternatives. For example, respondents may ordinarily prefer democracy but willing to accommodate in some circumstances, non-democratic alternatives. To that extent he/she is basically a 'democrat'. Those who are willing to accommodate non-democratic alternatives are rather 'conditional democrats'.



inadequate as a solution to the African crises (Onimode 1988); rather a more holistic political and socio-economic democracy is required. Data presented in table 4 show that Nigerian respondents who value democracy for its economic dividends were more likely to support a government-run economy than their counterparts who valued democracy in political terms (table 4).

#### **5.1.4 Perception of Corruption in Nigerian Political Institutions**

For four consecutive years from 1999 to 2002, Nigeria was classified as either the most corrupt or second most corrupt nation in the world by the Transparency International in its Corruption Perception Index<sup>11</sup>. Several laws have been enacted and many agencies established in the past to control corrupt practices in the country. Large scale corruption started in the 1970s as collusion between foreign businesses and government officials<sup>12</sup>. Since then corruption has seeped through all facets of life in the country (Alemika 2002, 2003).

Nigerian public perception of corruption has rarely been studied in the country, using the scientific methodology, until fairly recently. The *Afrobarometer Survey* employs such methodology and asked questions on public perception of corruption in governmental and non-governmental institutions. Results from the 2001 and 2003 surveys show that public officials are widely perceived as corrupt (table 5).

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<sup>11</sup> The weak methodological design of the Index is often ignored and the index's popularity among Western governments, media and scholars as reliable and valid basis for judging countries is unwarranted. Respondents are dominated by business executives often aliens to or in the countries that they evaluate. Secondly, it does not take account of the fact that foreign entrepreneurs are rightly or wrongly seen in many developing countries as 'vultures' and imperialist agents who must be resisted and made to pay 'bribe' for their expropriation of the countries' resources. In Nigeria, I have met several middle- and top-level government officials who express disgust at the collusion between foreign businesses and the country's rulers to export national wealth through illegal channels and activities detrimental to the country. A few said they would make their cut from such corrupt foreign entrepreneurs before they carry away their loot. The *Afrobarometer Survey* of 2001 and 2003 shows, for example, that 87% and 79% of some/most/all foreign businesses in the country are seen as corrupt respectively.

<sup>12</sup> Instances of these were found in 1975 and 1976 when the military regime led by Murtala Muhammed instituted investigations into many government projects. See (a) Federal Government of Nigeria (1976) Federal Military Government's Views on the Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry Into the Importation of Cement"; (b) Federal Government of Nigeria (1978) "Government Views on Second Report of the Federal Assets Investigation Panel.", and (c) Federal Government of Nigeria (1978) "Government Views on the Report of the Panel of Inquiry into the Purchase of Leyland Buses for FESTAC from British Leyland".

**Table 5: Perceptions of Level of Official Corruption in Government Institutions**

<i>How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?</i>	<i>None or some of them % 2003</i>	<i>Most or all of them %</i>		<i>Don't know or haven't heard enough to say % 2003</i>
		<i>2001</i>	<i>2003</i>	
The President and officials in his office	47	34	48	4
Elected leaders (Legislators and Councillors)	43	43	53	5
Judges and magistrates	48	34	42	10
Government officials	42	44	55	3
Border officials (Customs/Immigration)	35	52	57	8
Police	28	66	70	2

None of the institutions were perceived as non-corrupt by up to one-half of the respondents. The police and the border officials were perceived as most corrupt while the judges and magistrates, and the president and officials in his office were rated as least corrupt (table 5). Corruption in the Nigeria Police Force is widespread at all levels. But it is especially common or more visible among the junior officials posted on general duty as investigation officers, prosecutors, highway patrol officials, task forces with whom most citizens have involuntary contacts (Alemika 2003; Alemika and Chuckwuma 2000). But most of the cases of corruption and extortion by policemen involve small amounts of money collected as 'tolls', frequently in the range of 20-100 Naira (less than one American dollar). This form of corruption contrasts with relatively less frequent cases of corruption in the Presidency and Parliament by elected officials and top-ranking public officers. Corruption among the latter often involves millions of dollars, as demonstrated by the case of the country's former military head of state, General Sani Abacha, who was alleged to have deposited billions of dollars looted from government treasury in European banks.

### **5.1.5 Perception of Government's Economic and Social Performance**

In the past, Nigerian governments have been overthrown based on allegations of poor management of the economy and social services provisioning. On December 31, 1983, the civilian administration led by Shehu Shagari was overthrown by the military. In his broadcast announcing the overthrow of the government on the Federal Radio Corporation (a federal government radio

agency), Sani Abacha, then a Brigadier, provided the following justification for the coup:

‘You are all living witnesses to the grave economic predicament and uncertainty which an inept and corrupt leadership has imposed on our beloved nation for the past four years ... Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged ... There is inadequacy of food at reasonable prices for our people ... Health services are in shambles as our hospitals are reduced to mere consulting clinics, without drugs, water and equipment. Our educational system is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Unemployment figures, including graduates have reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions ...’ (*The Guardian* (Lagos), January 1, 1984; *New Nigeria*, January 1, 1984).

Similar arguments were made when that same military government was overthrown and a new military government led by Ibrahim Babangida assumed power on August 27, 1985. The previous military government was accused of insensitivity, repression and incompetence in solving the country’s socioeconomic problems (*The Guardian*, August 28, 1985).

**Table 6 : Public Assessment of Government's Economic and Social Performance**

How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say?	Fairly/very well		Fairly/very badly (2003) %	Don't know or haven't heard enough to say.
	2001 %	2003 %		
Managing the economy	55	32	67	1
Keeping prices stable	26	16	84	1
Creating job	47	23	76	1
Ensuring everyone has enough to eat	30	22	76	2
Narrowing the gaps between the rich and poor	26	14	85	1
Addressing educational needs	61	38	60	1
Improving basic health services	62	48	51	2
Delivering household water	43	31	68	1
Reducing crime	57	38	61	1
Resolving conflicts between communities	61	45	51	3

How well is the Nigerian government managing the economy and addressing economic opportunities and social services required by the citizens? Table 6 presents the analysis of responses from Nigerian respondents.

The performance of government in regards to the management of the economy and social services provisioning is evaluated as very poor. However, its performance was rated higher in the areas of social services and safety. It was rated poorly in terms of economic performance. Comparatively, government performance was rated higher during the 2001 survey, reflecting a diminishing perception of government efficacy in managing the economy and social services.

**5.1.6 Social, Economic and Political Conditions: Past and Present**

The struggle against military rule and the quest for democracy in Nigeria derived from the repression, corruption and mismanagement of the economy and social services that characterised military dictatorship. As a result, democratic legitimation may be affected by perception of the performance of the civilian government relative to the past military regime. To what extent have socioeconomic and political conditions improved or deteriorated relative to the past? Relevant data in table 7 shows that substantial improvements were reported in the area of civil liberties. However, worsening economic conditions were also reported (table 7).

*Table 7: A Comparison of Past and Present Social, Economic and Political Conditions*

<i>Comparing our present system of government to the former system of government, are the following things worse or better now than they used to be, or about the same?</i>	Better or much better		Same (2003) %	Worse or much worse (2003) %	Don't know (2003) %
	2001 %	2003 %			
Availability of goods	46	33	20	47	1
People's standard of living	43	27	16	57	0
Availability of job opportunities	36	19	17	63	1
Gaps between rich and poor	24	14	15	71	1
Freedom to say what you think	82	63	18	18	1
Freedom to join any political organization	84	68	16	14	2
Freedom to chose who to vote for	81	63	18	18	2
Equal and fair treatment for all by government	52	34	27	38	2
Freedom from being arrested when innocent	71	53	25	20	3

The data indicate, therefore that the civilian government has ensured better protection of rights to assembly, speech and political choice. But it has not been able to effectively address the economic problems confronting the people.

### 5.1.7 Citizens’ Trust in Political Institutions

Trust is used as proxy for the citizens’ confidence in and the legitimation of the incumbent government. Nigeria has vibrant and plural civil society, critical media and intellectual traditions that have been maintained in spite of protracted military rule. While military rule destroyed the institutional base of critical intellectual tradition by under-funding the universities, resulting in serious brain drain, the spirit of the tradition lives on. Similarly, the media played an active role during the decolonisation struggle and under the military rule and continue to do so in the present civil rule dispensation. Several civil society groups, including religious bodies, trade unions and professional association, cultural and community-based development organisations are constantly contesting and scrutinising the activities of the government at various levels. These features (critical and radical activism, pluralism and vigilance) of civil society in the country have implications for trust in political institutions as the activities of government are constantly placed in the public domain for scrutiny in spite of the effort of government to conceal them.

*Table 8: Trust in Political Institutions*

<i>Political offices and officials</i>		<i>A lot</i>	<i>A very great deal</i>	<i>A little bit</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
President	2003	3	15	41	40
	2001	15	24	43	17
The National Parliament	2003	1	10	40	44
	2001	6	15	46	29
National Electoral Commission	2003	2	10	34	49
	2001	5	16	45	30
The Army	2003	3	18	34	44
	2001	5	9	31	52
Law Courts	2003	3	19	42	32
	2001	8	18	48	24
Police	2003	1	10	30	58
	2001	3	8	30	58

*Note:* Percentage does not add to 100 because ‘don’t know’ responses are not reported in the table.

How much trust do Nigerians have in their various political institutions? Figures in table 8 show that public institutions are widely distrusted. Level of distrust substantially rose between 2001 and 2003 surveys (table 8).

Less than 20% of the respondents trusted the president a lot or a great deal. This represents a sharp decline from the 39% that trusted him a lot or a great deal in 2001. Law courts were the most trusted in 2003, but trust levels in law courts were actually higher in 2002. Of particular note and concern is that only the military recorded increasing trust from the citizens. This trend (increasing confidence in the military and decreasing trust in civil political institutions), if it continues, may have implications for democratic consolidation in the nation.

The descriptive analyses above provides background to the multivariate analyses in the second part of this section. Overall, the descriptive analyses show that:

1. Nigerians prefer democracy more than non-democratic systems of government;
2. They are not satisfied with the way democracy works in the country. Although, the level of support or preference for democracy declined between 2001 and 2003, it has not reached a crisis stage, of open agitation or movements calling for undemocratic forms of government. A national election was conducted in 2003. Domestic and foreign monitors reported widespread irregularities in the election (Transition Monitoring Group, 2003; Alemika 2004). It is not clear whether or not increasing dissatisfaction with democracy as well as the decline in support for democracy resulted from grievances and disenchantment associated with the election. Besides the election, the country has recorded unprecedented level of political violence since transition to civil rule led by Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state (1976-1979). The impact of the high level of political violence and ethno-religious violent conflicts on trust in government and democratic legitimation has not yet been studied.
3. One-half of Nigerian respondents prefer market economy, although more than a third (34%) of the respondents also preferred a government-run economy.
4. Government's social and economic performance was largely assessed as very poor. Economic and social conditions were considered as deteriorating in relation to the situation under the past system of government. However, the political conditions – recognition and protection of rights of assembly, association and political choice, and freedom from arbitrary arrests were reported to have substantially improved under the present system of government.
5. Nigerian respondents express distrust for the major political institutions (presidency, parliament, law courts and judges, police, electoral

commission and the army). All the institutions, with the exception of the army, recorded a decline in the level of public trust in them between 2001 and 2003.

### **5.1.8 Explanations of Public Approval of and Trust in Political Institutions**

The degrees of public approval of political institutions as well as trust in them constitute appropriate indicators of the legitimation of the incumbent government. In examining the determinants of public approval of and trust in political institutions, we carried out a factor analysis of selected questions in the *Afrobarometer Survey* questionnaire. The questions were selected on the basis of theoretical and empirical literature on trust and approval (Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Bratton and Mattes 2001; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Levi and Stoker 2000; Montero *et al* 1997; Vassilev 2004; Weatherford 1992; Weil 1989). Based on the factor analysis, seven factors (approval, corruption perception, electoral fairness, political performance - protection of civil liberties, poverty, trust and socioeconomic performance) were extracted (table 9) and used for analysis in the subsequent sections. All together, the factors seem to be dimensions of governance.

Approval factor is very strong and together with trust may be interpreted as legitimation dimensions of governance. The bivariate correlation coefficients between the two factors are moderately high (table 10).

The two performance and other factors represent explanatory variables. Thus, in our multivariate statistical analyses presented in tables 11 and 12, approval and trust were dependent variables while the other factors were treated and entered as independent variables.

Table 10 presents the bivariate correlation among the variables in the regression models in Table 11 and 12.

**Table 9: Description of Factor Analysis and Scale Reliability Analysis Results**

<i>Description of Composite Scales</i>	<i>Factor analysis</i>	<i>Scale reliability analysis</i>	
	<i>% variance explained</i>	<i>No. of questions</i>	<i>Alpha coefficient</i>
APPROVAL: Public approval or disapproval of performance of elected officials and judges	20.08	5	.907
CORRUPTION: Public perception of official corruption in key public offices/officials	6.43	6	.895
ELECTORAL FAIRNESS: Extent to which 2003 elections were honestly conducted (free and fair).	3.88	3	.923
POLITICAL PERFORMANCE: Improvement or deterioration in level of civil rights of association, expression, and political participation	4.69	5	.860
POVERTY: Reported frequency of deprivations in basic needs – food, health, school fees, water, income	4.25	5	.779
TRUST: Extent of trust in public institutions	3.11	9	.878
ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE: Handling of economic issues – managing the economy, creating jobs, keeping prices stable; narrowing inequalities and food security		5	.851
SOCIAL PERFORMANCE: Addressing education, health services, delivering household water, fighting corruption and resolving communal conflicts	3.21	4	.776



**Table 10: Correlation Coefficients of Variables in Regression Analyses**

	Approval	Corruption	Electoral Fairness	Political Performance	Poverty	Trust	Economic Performance	Social Performance	Ruling Party Affiliation	Religion	Identity	Education	Employment Status
Approval													
Corruption	-.365*												
Electoral Fairness	.265*	-.122*											
Political Performance	.411*	-.109*	.203*										
Poverty	-.030	.044*	.022	-.088*									
Trust	.579*	-.223*	.197*	.347*	.043*								
Economic Performance	.581*	-.307*	.299*	.326*	-.037	.497*							
Social Performance	.503*	-.264*	.227*	.381*	-.065*	.443*	.697*						
Ruling Party Affiliation	.114*	-.032	.066*	.022	-.002	.095*	.151*	.105*					
Religion	-.345*	.115*	-.151*	-.249*	-.070*	-.372*	-.358*	-.249*	.001				
Identity	-.147*	.096*	-.116*	-.134*	.034	-.126*	-.163*	-.170*	-.059*	.136*			
Education	-.065	.051*	-.015	-.021	-.159*	-.121*	-.083*	-.009	-.033	.257*	-.036		
Employment Status	-.095	.024	-.013	-.038	-.056*	-.051*	-.056*	-.036	.004	.057*	-.008	.075*	

From the bivariate correlations, public approval of political institutions was significantly and positively correlated with perceptions of economic performance, social performance, political performance, fairness of elections and affiliation with the ruling party, while negatively correlated with corruption.

#### **5.1.8.1 Public Approval of Political Institutional Performance**

Bivariate correlations do not provide rigorous explanations because their coefficients may be influenced by exogenous variables. Multivariate analysis minimises this problem. However, linear multivariate regression does not produce incontestable causal explanations, and interpretations have to be guided by theoretical framework, experience and logic. Table 11 presents a regression analysis aimed at an explanation of public approval. Some governance variables from table 10 and socio-demographic variables were specified and entered into the model as independent variables (table 11).

The multiple regression analysis in table 11 yielded the following results:

1. Economic performance had the most decisive impact on public approval of political institutions. In a stepwise regression method, it was the first variable to enter the analysis and it also has the highest beta (standardised coefficient) weight. Thus, the higher the perception of government economic performance, the higher the approval of political institutions.
2. Social and political performances of the government also have significant effect on public approval of public institutions.
3. Corruption negatively impacts public approval. The higher the perception of official corruption, the lower the approval of political institutions.
4. The extent to which elections are perceived as free and fair also exhibits significantly positive relationship with public approval. Those who perceive elections as free and fair were more likely to give high approval rating to the government.
5. Religious affiliation also impact public approval. Christians were less likely than their Muslim counterparts to give high approval rating to the government. The present result is revealing in the sense that it is commonly assumed that the Muslims, who are concentrated in the northern part of the country are more critical of the president who is a Christian from the South-western part of the country. But as the result here indicates, the contrary is

the case. Two explanations may be provided for this result. First, the media and human rights' NGOs are concentrated in the Southern part of the country and dominated by Christians. Therefore, critical exposure and discussions of the government activities are more prevalent among Christians in Southern Nigeria, perhaps resulting in greater knowledge of governance and public disapproval of public institutions. The second plausible explanation is based on Islamic religious doctrine that generally tends to ascribe the source of public or political power to God. Such a doctrine engenders less critical attitudes toward authority. In Nigeria, the questioning of the exercise of political power by Muslims tend to be exercised as sporadic opposition often accompanied with violence rather than routinised or institutionalised opposition through the press.

6. Employment status also impacted approval. But paradoxically, it was those who were employed who were less likely to give high approval rating to public institutions. Again, exposure to government policies which employment provides, especially in the context where government performance was perceived as poor, may influence approval. During the past two years, the Federal government increased petroleum prices thrice, citing international prices, withdrawal of subsidies, and collapse of the nation's refineries and smuggling of the product to the neighbouring countries as reasons. On each occasion, the central labour union and the Nigerian Labour Congress threatened strike action and actually went on strike on two occasions to force government to reduce petroleum prices. In October 2003, the government announced a total deregulation and encouraged oil marketers to import oil, a move that was widely criticised as subjection of the country to imperialism. Furthermore, the policy was compared with the situation during the colonial era where agricultural produce was bought cheaply and exported only for the resulting finished products to be imported by colonial merchant companies and sold at exorbitant prices. On a symbolic level, the price increases were often announced on important national days such as October 1 2003 (independence day) and May 29 2004 (5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of return to civil rule). Employed persons were more likely to be exposed to the debates and struggles on these issues.

**Table 11: Determinants of Public Approval of Political Institutional Performance**

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Unstandardised coefficients</i>		<i>Standardised coefficients</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
<i>Constant</i>	1.214	.123		9.853	.001
Economic performance	.347	.042	.307	8.312	.001
Social performance	.113	.037	.108	3.054	.002
Political performance (Civil rights)	.171	.023	.202	7.400	.001
Corruption perception	-.207	.027	-.197	-7.578	.001
Electoral fairness	.103	.045	.060	2.325	.020
Religion (Christianity = 1; Islam = 0)	-.183	.040	-.126	-4.548	.001
Employment status (unemployed = 0; employed = 1)	-.080	.036	-.055	-2.220	.027
Poverty	.003	.021	.004	.152	.879
Ruling Party affiliation (Yes = 1; No = 0)	.070	.042	.042	1.681	.093
Education (Primary and lower=0; Secondary and higher=1)	.010	.018	.015	.567	.571
Identity (Nigerian = 1; sub- national/primordial = 0)	.009	.036	.006	.244	.807
$R^2 = .457$ ; Adjusted $R^2 = .450$					

### 5.1.8.2 Citizens' Trust in Political Institutions

What factors determine trust in political institutions in Nigeria? This question has rarely been investigated in Nigeria. The analysis presented in table 12 provides some answers to the question.

The results of the multiple regression show that the following variables explain trust in political institutions by the citizens:

1. Performance variables (economic, social and political) were the most significant explanations of trust in government. The higher the perception of

government performance, the more the trust in government. This result is similar to what was obtained in the analysis of public approval (in table 11).

**Table 12: Determinants of Trust in Political Institutions**

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Unstandardised coefficients</i>		<i>Standardised coefficients</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
Constant	-.154	.147		-1.046	.296
Economic performance	.305	.050	.247	6.119	.001
Social performance	.160	.044	.140	3.624	.001
Political performance (Civil rights)	.147	.028	.159	5.317	.001
Corruption perception	-.077	.033	-.068	-2.385	.017
Poverty	.054	.025	.060	2.166	.031
Religion (Christianity = 1; Islam = 0)	-.292	.048	-.184	-6.068	.001
Electoral fairness	.033	.053	.018	.615	.538
Ruling Party affiliation (Yes = 1; No = 0)	.063	.050	.035	1.265	.206
Employment status (unemployed = 0; employed = 1)	-.012	.043	-.008	-.282	.778
Education (Primary and lower=0; Secondary and higher=1)	-.025	.021	-.034	-1.204	.229
Identity (Nigerian = 1; sub-national/primordial = 0)	.013	.043	.008	.304	.761
$R^2 = .339$ ; Adjusted $R^2 = .331$					

2. Corruption negatively impacts political trust.
3. Religion also impact on trust in government and in the same direction that was found and explained in our earlier analysis of public approval of public institutions.
4. Poverty also impacts trust in government with the poorer segments more trusting than the richer individuals. As in the case of employment status discussed under the analysis of public approval, the poor may be less exposed to government activities and therefore less critical of it, especially

in the light of higher poverty rates in rural areas far removed from the presence and activities of government. In an earlier analysis (Alemika 2004), we discovered that urban dwellers were more distrustful of government than their rural counterparts, perhaps a case of the proverbial adage that ‘familiarity breeds contempt’.

5. Unemployment status that was a significant explanation of political approval was not a significant explanation of trust. Also poverty that was not a significant explanation of political approval turned out as a significant explanation of political trust.
6. The results generally support previous studies that performance counts in the legitimation of the government (Weil 1989; Vassilev 2004; Bratton and Mattes 2001). On a comparative basis, the results for public approval and political trust are similar. This indicates that public approval and public trust are interrelated concepts predicated on legitimation. As a result, trust was excluded from the model on approval just as approval was excluded from the regression model on trust.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

There has been debate on whether or not performance by government matters in the legitimation of democracy (Vassilev, 2004; Weil 1989; Bratton and Mattes 2001). The figures in table 1 show a moderately high (although diminishing) support for democracy in Nigeria under conditions of (a) widespread dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in the country; (b) dissatisfaction with government’s economic policy of liberalisation and privatisation; (c) high perceptions of widespread and increasing official corruption and (d) high perceptions of poor and declining socio-economic performance by government (tables 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7). The tentative conclusion, especially in the light of the nature of the data derived from cross-sectional surveys rather than longitudinal data, is that democratic regime legitimation is relatively independent of government performance, at least in the short run. However, in the transitional polities, poor performance may erode democratic regime legitimacy as declining support for democracy, increasing distrust of political institutions and growing trust in non-democratic institution like the military can be observed (tables 1 and 8).

One significant point borne out by the finding of this study and which has been relatively consistent across studies is that democratic regime legitimation may be insulated from government performance. This indicates that the argument in favour of separating analysis of legitimation of democratic system from trust in incumbent government is valid (Gunther and Monthero 2000). The latter is more vulnerable to public perception of performance by government. This study indicates that in the context of Nigeria as a transitional society, legitimation of democratic regime and incumbent government are affected by economic, social and political performances of the government, but at different rates with the impact of performance and corruption and legitimacy on the legitimacy of incumbent government being more volatile. In the old liberal democracies, poor performances, especially economic management, often lead to the defeat of incumbent government. But in transitional polities, like Nigeria and most other African nations, where many of the old strongmen and dictators transformed as the new rulers and are frustrating free and fair elections and possible alternation of political parties and politicians in government, the prospect of democratic transition reversal must be seen as an ever present danger.

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The Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) was established in 1975 as part of the School of Economics and joined the CSSR in 2002. SALDRU conducted the first national household survey in 1993 (the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development). More recently, SALDRU ran the Langeberg Integrated Family survey (1999) and the Khayelitsha/Mitchell's Plain Survey (2000). Current projects include research on public works programmes, poverty and inequality.

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