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Ethnic versus national identity and satisfaction with democracy: The decline of the ethnic cleavage in Nigeria?

Anna Brigevich^a and Emmanuel Oritsejfor^b

^aAssociate Professor of European Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway; ^bProfessor of Political Science, North Carolina Central University, Durham, NC, United States

ABSTRACT

In this article, we evaluate the impact of ethnic and national identities on satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria, a state with deep historical ethno-regional divisions. Applying Easton's (1965) seminal framework of diffuse versus specific support, we examine how Nigerians combine their ethnic and national identities (diffuse support), and analyze the extent to which territorial identities influence democratic satisfaction vis-à-vis evaluative factors (specific support), such as trust in institutions and the current government's performance in addressing the needs of its citizens. We employ a multilevel model using the seventh round of the Nigeria Afrobarometer survey. We find that a dominant ethnic identity does decrease democratic satisfaction. However, a number of specific support measures, such as trust in the state and local governments and evaluations of the government's economic performance are stronger predictors. We interpret this as a decline in the salience of the ethnic cleavage in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS Ethnic and national identities; satisfaction with democracy; diffuse versus specific support; public opinion; Nigeria

Introduction

In the past two decades, democracy has been in retreat around the globe as the share of authoritarian regimes rose 26% between 2005 and 2018 (Freedom House 2019). At the individual level, dissatisfaction with democracy has risen to an all-time high since 2005, especially in developed democracies (Foa et al. 2020). This global pattern is reflected in developing countries as well. In Nigeria, the proportion of citizens 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with democracy had dropped from 84 to 25 percent by 2005 (LeVan 2019). The 2017 round of Afrobarometer data presents a more hopeful picture,

CONTACT Anna Brigevich  anna.brigevich@gmail.com  Associate Professor of European Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

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with only 58% of Nigeria's citizens reporting democratic dissatisfaction. Nonetheless, these trends are worrying, as regime legitimacy, and therefore stability, are contingent on citizens expressing trust in governing institutions and their perception that the government is working to meet societal demands (Easton 1965). Establishing political legitimacy across the population is one of the main challenges in ethnically diverse societies, and a lack of political support may lead citizens to opt out of or rebel against the system (Flesken and Hartl 2020).

In this analysis, we explore the factors that determine satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria, a state with deep historical ethno-regional divisions. We are particularly interested in the role that ethnicity plays in conditioning democratic satisfaction, as ethnic identities in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have long been associated with regime volatility and tribalism that erodes trust in national institutions (Horowitz 1985). Agbiboa (2013, 3) summarizes a prevailing point of view: 'One of the extant bequests of the colonial era in Nigeria is the enthronement of ethno-religious identities – the kind that dethrone national identity and belie national interests.' While few scholars doubt that ethnicity exerts some influence on the political system, the relevant question is how much influence can be attributed to ethnic identity when compared to other structural factors (such as education and age) and political attitudes (such as evaluations of government performance), (Norris and Mattes 2013).

Applying Easton's (1965) seminal framework of diffuse versus specific support for political systems, we examine how Nigerians combine their ethnic and national identities (diffuse support), and hypothesize that individuals with a predominantly ethnic identity are less satisfied with democracy than those who combine their ethnic and national identities in equal measure. We argue that dissatisfaction is particularly strong for those individuals with a predominant ethnic identity when they feel that their ethnic group has been treated unfairly in the past. However, while we expect that ethnic identity persists as an important societal cleavage, we contend that satisfaction with democracy is also contingent on evaluative factors (specific support), such as trust in institutions across various territorial levels of governance and the current government's performance in addressing the needs of its citizens. Hence, we are interested in assessing the degree to which Nigeria has recently shifted from a system dominated by the ethnicity cleavage to a multi-ethnic system that incorporates new cleavages (Horowitz 1985), such as economic redistribution and regime security. In the process, we maintain that satisfaction with democracy, as a measure in public opinion studies, is more reflective of short-term evaluations of government performance rather than preference for alternative systems of government, such as military rule or a one-party state.

We test our hypotheses using the 2017 round of the Afrobarometer survey from Nigeria. We employ a two-level hierarchical linear model (HLM) that

accounts for ethnic identity at both the group and individual levels. Our results show that a predominantly ethnic identity at the individual level does depress democratic satisfaction to some degree, while individuals with dual ethnic and national identities are more satisfied with democracy. However, our robustness checks show that at the group level, there is no significant difference in democratic satisfaction between the Hausa-Fulani (the dominant group) and other ethnic groups. In fact, a number of our specific support measures, such as trust in the state and local government and evaluations of the government's economic performance, are equally strong predictors of democratic satisfaction as ethnic identity, if not more so. We interpret this as progress in moving Nigeria away from a state divided solely by the ethnic cleavage to a more developed political system where actors compete for support based on cross-cutting issues such as economic development.

Satisfaction with democracy and diffuse versus specific support for political systems

In the literature on democratic support, satisfaction with democracy is one of the most used indicators in studies drawing on survey data (Linde and Ekman 2003; Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders 2012). On the one hand, the concept may tap into general support for democracy as a political regime type when compared to more autocratic alternatives. On the other, the concept may be a direct, short-term evaluation of the outputs of the democratic system and a measure of the discrepancy between democratic norms and the actual democratic process. As such, the concept may be informed by support for the incumbent government and its ability to deliver effectively on societal demands, ideological proximity to the party in power, and trust in political institutions (Dalton 2004). In this analysis, bolstered by the survey findings of Linde and Ekman (2003) and Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders (2012), we adopt the latter conceptualization and define satisfaction with democracy as public evaluations of how well autocratic or democratic governments work in practice.¹ Hence, a survey respondent may feel that democracy is preferable to all other systems of government, but is dissatisfied with the way the current government is executing its duties. Our analysis shows this is indeed the case. The qualms Nigerians have about democracy stem not from preferring anti-democratic alternatives, but rather from other considerations, such as territorial identities, trust in political actors and institutions, and evaluations of the economy.

Our theoretical framework is rooted in Easton's (1965) seminal work on support for political systems. Easton identifies three 'objects' of political support: community, regime, and authority. Furthermore, Easton distinguishes between diffuse and specific support, both of which must be

present for a political system to maintain legitimacy. Diffuse support refers to the deep-seated, affective loyalty a citizen feels to their political community and pertains to the feeling of social solidarity that describes the communal sentiment of people with regard to working and living together in a society to fulfill all their needs (Easton 1965, 185). The members of this political community 'may well have different cultures and traditions, or they may be entirely separate nationalities,' (Easton 1965, 177). The important thing is that political community members are linked by an agreed-upon division of political labor (e.g., active participation in the political process) and realize that because they are governed by a shared political structure, they also share a common political fate. This definition of political community is particularly appropriate for Nigeria, where ethno-regional and national identities exist alongside one another. For a regime to remain stable, diffuse support for the political community must prevail, lest the regime risk disintegration, such as inter-group violence, civil war, or secession. Given that Nigeria's post-independence history is characterized by ethnic fragmentation that has led to political violence and civil war, we think it important to evaluate the impact of diffuse support on satisfaction with democracy.

Specific support is more rational or utility-driven and targeted at political institutions or actors. While diffuse support is less likely to vary over time, specific support is cyclical and contingent on the present-day performance of politicians. Therefore, specific support is acutely related to support for authorities, and is predicated on political actors maintaining the trust of the electorate. In a healthy democratic system, poor performance and a breach of trust result in the public 'throwing the rascals out,' (Grönlund and Setälä 2007). However, as Easton (1965, 231) points out, in a system that fails to meet a minimal number of demands of most of the relevant members with some minimal frequency, it will be impossible to prevent these members from developing feelings of deep discontent. This discontent may initially be directed at the authorities. However, prolonged grievances, especially in a democratic system that routinely brings in new actors as the old rascals are thrown out, may result in dissatisfaction shifting towards the regime and even the political community.

As Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders (2012) point out, Easton's claim that all political objects (community, regime, and authorities) might be recipients of both specific and diffuse support raises problems of interpretation and operationalization in survey research. When queried about their level of satisfaction with democracy in their country, are respondents reporting their adherence to democratic ideals or confidence in regime institutions and the authorities that operate within? Studies show that survey respondents are able to distinguish among support for the political community, for democracy as the ideal form of government, and for the performance of the regime (Norris 1999; Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders 2012). These studies

also indicate that satisfaction with democracy is significantly correlated with confidence in political institutions (Zmerli and Newton 2008) and trust in politicians and the government (Grönlund and Setälä 2007). Furthermore, political trust is contingent upon specific policy outputs, such as successful economic performance and the authorities' ability to uphold rule of law and tackle corruption (Van der Meer and Hakhverdian 2017). Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders (2012) find satisfaction with democracy is a measure of citizens' support for the actual working of democracy. They write that satisfaction with democracy 'expresses people's evaluations of the performance of incumbent governments and, more broadly, of the actual achievements of the democratic process. It does not, therefore, measure adherence to democratic ideals or generalized confidence in the democratic institutions,' (Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders 2012, 14). Given this, the measure is closer to specific rather than diffuse support.

The majority of the analyses cited here have been carried out in industrialized, consolidated democracies of Western Europe. How well does this Eastonian framework travel to other parts of the globe where national identities are relatively newer and where the boundaries of what constitutes political community are still in flux? Notably, most of the aforementioned studies are concerned with unpacking the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and with specific support, taking diffuse support as a given. But what happens in complicated multiethnic societies, like Nigeria, where 'ethno-religious identities have proved far more resilient than national interests,' and where, according to some, 'political mobilization along ethno-religious lines has precluded the emergence of a true national identity,' (Agbiboa 2013, 4)? In such contexts, diffuse support might be more consequential for feeling satisfied with democracy than specific support, as evaluations of the government's performance and trust in regime institutions are mediated by loyalty to one's ethnic community. Furthermore, the very meaning of satisfaction with democracy, as a measure, may shift towards the diffuse side of the political support spectrum, as ethnic grievances over access to power may call into question the desirability of democratic institutions. However, this may be a rather pessimistic reading of Nigerian identity, or lack thereof. As LeVan's (2019) recent study of the 2015 Nigerian election shows, the electoral success of the All Progressives Congress (APC) was significantly predicated on a strategy of priming citizens to engage in economic voting. While there is evidence of both co-ethnic voting and religiously motivated voting on both sides of the partisan divide, 2015 electoral maps offer encouraging signs of voting across ethnicity and indicate that political institutions do promote inter-ethnic electoral coalitions. Thus, we may see that Nigerian public opinion has begun to converge on the patterns found in the previous studies.

Diffuse support: ethnic versus national identity

In Easton's framework, diffuse support for a political regime is predicated on a sense of 'we-feeling' and loyalty to the political community that structures one political fate, namely the nation. As such, it is most appropriately operationalized using survey questions regarding an individual's attachment to the nation and national pride (Dalton 2004; Brigevich 2016). However, in states with a colonial legacy, particularly those in SSA, deeply-seated ethnic identities may take precedence over national identities, and fuel inter-group conflict within the nation-state. In this context, a more effective measure of diffuse support is one that evaluates the propensity of citizens to incorporate national identity alongside their ethnic identity.

A number of scholars argue that the origins of ethnic conflict in Nigeria can be traced to two colonial-era developments. First, the British model of indirect rule, or government through 'native authorities' (Mazrui 2006), helped preserve indigenous cultures while at the same time sustaining tribal identities, thereby bringing together nations and peoples who did not construe themselves as a common society (Akinrinade 2000). Second, the introduction of regionalism, for administrative purposes, in the 1950s, created a three-way federation of northern, western, and eastern regions, which reinforced ethnic alliances and structured political mobilization along ethno-regional lines. The result was a political system that pitted the three major ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo) against one another in a competition over economic resources and political power. Despite constitutional reforms focused on balancing political influence among the three major groups, power is highly centralized in the hands of the Hausa leadership, who have dominated the political landscape (Agbiboa 2013). The consequence of this ethnic fragmentation has been a federal government that lacks legitimacy with a portion of their citizens and an incomplete and often-times stalled democratization process (Abubakar 2001).

However, not all Nigeria scholars have such a pessimistic reading of the impact of Nigeria's constitutional territorial reforms. In his seminal work *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Horowitz (1985, 602–613) argues that federalism can either exacerbate or mitigate ethnic conflict – much depends on the number of component states, their boundaries, and their ethnic group composition. While the First Nigerian Republic (1960–66) certainly encouraged interethnic conflict by concentrating power in the hands of the three main ethnic groups that controlled the three main regions, the constitutional reforms of the Second Republic (1979–83) dispersed that power among nineteen newly-created states and reduced the hold of the Hausa-Fulani on the North and on Nigeria, writ large. The federal reforms forced Hausa-Fulani politicians to appeal to ethnic groups outside the core area of their support, paving the way for greater interethnic cooperation across Nigeria.

Furthermore, as new states fought to advance their interests, a few nonethnic issues and actors were introduced. The result is a political environment where non-ethnic and class issues have historically competed with ethnic forces (Diamond 1983; Sklar, Onwudiwe, and Kew 2006), and where ethnic identity has become more fluid and multilayered over time, contributing to a more complex and integrated society.

Hence, while we do not dispute that ethnic identity has, at times, fueled conflict in Nigeria, we approach with caution the assertion that the politicization of ethnicity has precluded the development of a national identity. Ethnic and national identities are both social identities. Social identity refers to the psychological link between individuals and the social groups to which they belong (Tajfel 1981). A strong collective identity fosters feelings of mutual obligation among group members and impels attachment and loyalty to the in-group, frequently at the expense of the out-group. Hence, social identity simultaneously integrates and divides people.

We eschew primordial definitions of ethnic identity in this analysis and maintain that ethnic identity is socially constructed out of the material of language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry, or regionality. While ethnic identity is largely ascriptive in nature, the 'location and meaning of particular ethnic boundaries are continuously negotiated, revised, and revitalized, both by the ethnic group members themselves as well as by outside observers,' (Nagel 1994, 153). In the Nigerian context, ethnicity tends to be understood as 'the employment and mobilization of ethnic identity or difference to gain advantages in situations of competition, conflict or co-operation,' (Osaghae 1995, 11). Rather than viewing ethnicity as negative, disruptive, and conflictual, Osaghae (2003) argues that ethnicity can play a positive societal role in regimes where state capacity and legitimacy have declined. Ethnicity has been helpful in the mobilization of resources and self-reliant development at the local and community levels, as evidenced by the preponderance of ethnic associations throughout the country. Ethnicity also offers 'a weapon that oppressed groups including minorities can use to articulate their grievances and seek redress,' (Osaghae 2003, 56). Indeed, the democratic movement of the 1990s was spearheaded by aggrieved pro-democracy ethnic organizations that pushed for greater power-sharing for their groups in a reconfigured Nigerian state.

Ethnicity is closely tied to regionality in Nigeria, as the three major ethnic groups and a number of smaller ones are located in specific territories rather than being dispersed through the country. It is this overlap between ethnicity and territory that has frequently contributed to conflict in Nigeria, as in the case when ethnic groups from southern, oil-rich territories (Igbo, Ijaw) felt under-represented in the political center, despite the transfer of oil revenue away from their homeland (Osaghae 2003). Similarly, decades of fraught elections, specifically in 1979 and in 1993, left many Yoruba, the dominant ethnic

group in the southwest, convinced that they had been denied the presidency twice, generating a 'Yoruba debt,' (LeVan 2019). With the 1999 transition to multiparty democracy under President Olusegun Obasanjo, the leading Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) entered into a 'gentleman's agreement', known as 'power shift,' to rotate the presidency between the north and the south every eight years. In such a way, the leaders of the PDP hoped to ameliorate ethno-regional tensions in the country, albeit with limited success. We return to the consequences of power shift in the next section.

There is much conceptual overlap between ethnic and national identity. National identity is constructed by political elites as the ideology of the state, where common genealogical and geographic roots are myths created to effectively bind community members together (Anderson 1991). For community members, national identity refers to an awareness of membership in a nation, (potential or actual) coupled with a desire to achieve, maintain, and perpetuate the identity, integrity, and prosperity of that nation. Nationalism succeeds when all the members of the nation become fully integrated and support its political ideology (Eriksen 1991). Inhabitants become nationalists as their identities gradually grow compatible with the demands of the nation, (which are shaped by the national government,) and support its growth. This definition rejects the notion that nationalism is naturally ethnicity-driven. Although a multiethnic state may find it more difficult to foster a sense of national identity among all its inhabitants, the creation of national identity is still attainable. However, if the national identity building process is unsuccessful, it becomes transformed into ethnicities, whose members reside uncomfortably within the territorial and political confines of the state. This helps account for the rise of national extremist movements and demands for regional secession, as was the case with the Igbo in the late 1960s and the Yoruba in the early 1990s. At the same time, Osaghae (2003, 63) points out that the fact that these secession threats have tended to subside with appeasements such as 'power shift' indicates that secession is essentially a redress-seeking mechanism. 'It is remarkable that even with the rebellions in the Niger Delta, the demands have continued to be for equity and justice *within* the Nigerian state rather than for separate, sovereign states,' (Osaghae 2003, 66).

The literature on territorial identities in federalized, semi-federal, and ethno-federal states shows that subnational and national identities can be reconciled (Llamazares and Reinares 1999; Martinez-Herrera 2002; Rosie and Bond 2008; Brigeovich 2012). Moreno, who has greatly contributed to the study of dual identity, argues that citizens in historical regions incorporate, in variable proportions, both the ethnoterritorial (regional) identity and the state (national) identity. 'As a result of this, citizens share their institutional loyalties at both levels of political legitimacy without any apparent fracture between them,' (Moreno 2006, 2). Given that Nigeria is similarly a federal

state with distinctive ethno-regional groups, we expect a significant proportion of Nigerians to report having a dual identity, where individuals simultaneously identify with their ethnic group and with the nation.

At the same time, some individuals are unable to reconcile their lower-order and higher-order identities (Inglehart 1977; Brigevich 2018; Llamazares and Reinares 1999). Specifically, these individuals eschew nation-level attachments and identify only with their ethno-regional group, and are construed as having a dominant or exclusive ethno-regional identity. Several studies show that an exclusive lower-order territorial identity may be parochial in nature (Inglehart 1977) and closely associated with practices that are characterized by the refusal to cooperate or trade with outsiders because this lowers the returns to members of parochial networks (Brigevich 2018). The reluctance to incorporate the national level into one's social identity suggests a greater proclivity for drawing sharper boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, preventing one from identifying with a higher-order, more encompassing, social identity. This is attributed to what Lawler (1992) calls the 'proximal' rule. Individuals tend to identify with those units that give them the most sense of control and generate positive emotions.

With the growing heterogeneity of contemporary states and the multiplicity of identities in federal countries like Nigeria, parochialists may fail to see their preferences addressed or realized at the national level. In accordance with social identity theory, the threat to group distinctiveness and autonomy motivates over-exclusion and intergroup differentiation for subnational exclusivists (Brewer and Roccas 2001). Numerous studies show that in regions with a distinct cultural or political history, ethno-regional and national identities are perceived as incompatible (Risse 2010, 71; Brigevich 2012; Carey 2002). This is primarily attributed to the decades-long subjugation of historical nationalities to the center, where regional customs and languages were perceived as threatening to the homogenizing policies of the modern day nation-state. The result has been persistent animosity between the periphery and the center, as well as a resurgence of ethno-regional identity, as was the case in the Biafra Conflict.

Whether an individual has an exclusive ethno-regional or a dual identity has important implications for their political attitudes. Studies show that individuals with a dual identity are more open to out-groups, more cosmopolitan, and more supportive of national government institutions (Citrin and Sides 2004; Brigevich 2018). Lerner (1958) describes transformation of 'parochial' into 'cosmopolitan' as the psychological changes that take place as an individual becomes urbanized, literate, exposed to mass media, and able to relate to an extensive political community rather than his village or tribe. A cosmopolitan sense of identity engenders openness to innovation and being responsive to ideas (e.g., nation-building) rather than immediate circumstances (e.g., loyalty to one's tribe) (Inglehart 1977, 57–60).

To summarize, we argue that satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria is partially predicated on diffuse support for the political community. Diffuse support, in this context, is contingent on the ability of an individual to reconcile and combine their ethnic and national identities. We anticipate that many Nigerians exhibit an inclusive, or dual identity, that is marked by tolerance of out-groups, some degree of cosmopolitanism, and, thus, responsiveness to nation-building. After all, like many African states, Nigeria has experienced significant economic growth in the past few decades, coupled with rapid urbanization, expansion of literacy, and access to more news media sources. These developments are all associated with an erosion of traditional social identities and lead to a decline in ethnicity as a predominant issue cleavage in society (Horowitz 1985). However, we also assume that for some portion of the Nigerian population, those with an exclusive or dominant ethnic identity, the nation is not a meaningful political community that imparts a sense of control over one's circumstances and engenders positive emotions. For these individuals, politics is a zero-sum game that pits members of one's ethnic group against all others in the fight for precious resources and political clout. We expect that satisfaction with democracy is lowest in these groups of individuals. We also take into account Nigeria's complicated past with resolving ethnic grievances. We expect that individuals who feel that their ethnic group has been treated unfairly in the past to be less satisfied with democracy (Wilkes and Wu 2018; Flesken and Hartl 2020), as the democratic transition has done little to provide these groups with genuine access to the political system.

Specific support: Institutional trust and government performance

In Easton's framework, specific support is derived from support for regime authorities and is contingent on the ability of political actors to fulfill societal demands. Studies that unpack the nature of specific support advocate parsing the concept into two distinct components: support for regime institutions, which is measured by questions of trust in governing bodies (i.e. the presidency, the parliament, political parties), and support for the current political actors in office, which is operationalized using questions about the government's performance in handling the country's affairs (Linde and Ekman 2003; Dalton 2004; Norris 1999). We anticipate that both high institutional trust and positive evaluations of the government's performance increase satisfaction with democracy (Zmerli and Newton 2008).

As Van der Meer and Hakhverdian (2017, 85) detail, public sector corruption has a strong, negative impact on political trust. Widespread corruption undermines the efficiency of national politics and displays a lack of care for citizens and their demands. Corrupt practices thrive on an institutional lack

of accountability and make it extremely difficult for governments to devise and implement policies that are responsive to the general public. Indeed, institutional trust has been difficult to maintain in Nigeria, a country mired in corruptive practices since independence. Nigeria consistently ranks as one of the worst offenders on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and public opinion surveys reveal that roughly 40% of Nigerians think that all the officials working in national, state, and local institutions are involved in corruption; a further 40% say that at least some of them are (Mbaegbu and Nwanze 2020). Bach (2007, 313) argues that the combination of Nigeria's 1999 return to democracy and a boost in oil revenues have heightened opportunities for 'grand' corruption and that the Fourth Republic's complex federal structure multiplies opportunities for access to office and resources. Nigeria's federalism, characterized by 'share of the national cake' ideology, creates a rentier approach to politics, and, despite policies aimed at fighting corruption, the political culture of the ruling elites remains, at all levels of government, fundamentally unchanged.

While enumerating the causes of Nigerian corruption is outside the scope of this paper, we focus on one particularly consequential factor: power shift and the concomitant zoning practices. As LeVan (2019) elaborates in his study of political competition in Nigeria, one of the founding principles of the PDP at the start of the Fourth Republic was power shift – a gentleman's agreement that was ultimately not enshrined in the new constitution, but remains the *de facto* means for selecting PDP candidates to stand for office across all levels of government. With the goal of moderating conflict among the major ethnic groups in their quest for political power, the practice involves rotating the party's presidential nominee between the north and the south every eight years. Additionally, the PDP implemented zoning (or rotation) of political offices at the national, state, and local levels, which limits eligibility for positions based on one's ethnographic background. While the intent was for power shift to gradually become irrelevant, the practice persists across parties today, and was partially responsible for PDP's ouster from the presidency in 2015 (LeVan 2019). Among Nigerian voters, attitudes towards power shift and zoning are mixed. On the one hand, some view it as a useful mechanism for limiting regional dominance at the national level. On the other, the fact that parties dictate who has the ability to stand for office based on ethnicity and not purely on professional qualifications leaves voters to question whether power actually comes from the electorate rather than political elites. The process imposes arbitrary constraints on voters' choices and forces ambitious politicians to wait their turn, sometimes against the wishes of the electorate. It also provides opportunities for elite bargaining behind the scenes, heightening perception of corruption.

Given that Nigerians are disheartened with political corruption at all territorial levels, we analyze the degree of political trust in five political

institutions and actors: the presidency, the National Assembly, governors, state houses, and local governments. Furthermore, we control for general perceptions about the degree of corruption in Nigeria.

In addition, we include a measure for perceived electoral fairness. As Flesken and Hartl (2020) point out, establishing electoral legitimacy across the population is vital for democratic stability. Representation enhances communication between representatives and the represented, increases trust in government and hence political legitimacy, and raises feelings of belonging to the polity. This is particularly consequential in the Nigerian context for a number of reasons. First, Flesken and Hartl (2020) show that being a member of a politically excluded ethnic group decreases perceptions of electoral fairness. The ongoing power shift debate in Nigeria highlights that ethnic minority groups' access to power remains a pressing concern for citizens, and feelings of exclusion from the electoral process are liable to lower satisfaction with the regime. Based on the critiques of power shift above, we assume that questions of electoral fairness are at least in part reflective of attitudes towards zoning practices. Second, LeVan (2019) demonstrates that electoral integrity was the second most prominent theme in the 2015 presidential election. This is unsurprising, given Nigeria's recent history of electoral violence and mismanagement. In 2015, Nigerians were particularly concerned with the effectiveness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in maintaining impartiality. Hence, an analysis of satisfaction with democracy in the country must take into account elections as a type of political institution upon which voters confer trust.

Finally, we turn to the last component of Easton's framework, support for authorities, which we operationalize as evaluations of the present-day government's performance in meeting citizens' demands. Political trust is highly correlated with perceptions of performance, although 'the extent to which political trust is based on *actual* policy performance and *actual* procedures remains hotly debated (Van der Meer and Hakhverdian 2017, 82). Hence, it is important to keep institutional trust and perceptions of performance as distinct concepts in our analysis. Traditionally, public opinion studies have focused on two types of performance: good economic outcomes and the quality of democratic procedures, such as maintaining rule of law and upholding human rights. Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders (2012) describe this as instrumental rationality – when the context in which people live is positively evaluated, citizens express their support of the political system. The better the system performance, the higher the citizens' satisfaction with democracy.

Much of the extant studies that evaluate the impact of performance on trust and satisfaction with democracy are carried out using survey data from European countries, where political competition is structured along deep societal divisions, or cleavages, and where the economic, worker-

employer cleavage has dominated party politics for over a century (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). As such, we may be skeptical as to how much explanatory traction theories of instrumental rationality may have outside of the European context, where ethnicity is presumed to be the dominant political cleavage. The traditional cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan are cross-cutting, meaning that they have the ability to appeal to a wide range of societal groups. Conversely, party competition based on ethnic identity presents a problem for building coalitions among a wide range of voters by fractionalizing the electorate, fueling conflict, and diminishing liberal democracy (Horowitz 1985).

The critical question for our analysis is the degree to which the Nigerian party system is still dominated by ethnicity as a singular cleavage, or whether new cleavages, such as the economic left-right cleavage, have emerged. If the ethnicity cleavage prevails, then regime trust and support for authorities will be largely rooted in whether one's ethnic group is power. If that is the case, then satisfaction with democracy, in our analysis, will be contingent largely on whether one feels that their ethnic group is treated unfairly. Similarly, individuals will only vote for the party that represents their ethnic group, and whether one's preferred party is in office will overshadow any meaningful evaluations of government performance as the driver of satisfaction with democracy (Cho 2004).

For us, this is an overly pessimistic reading of contemporary Nigerian politics specifically, and African politics generally. While we do not dispute that ethnicity remains an important part of African political life, a number of studies document the declining political saliency of ethnicity. For example, in their cross-national study of twelve African states, Norris and Mattes (2013) find that although ethnic-linguistic cleavages do structure party identification, the explanatory power of ethnicity remains limited. Rather, identification with the governing party is motivated by the government's policy performance on the provisions of basic services, such as health, education, and employment, and on approval of the performance of the legislature. Other studies find that African parties see the electoral benefits of programmatic appeals, as policy-based platforms generate a broader voter base (Basedau et al. 2011; Elischer 2013). In Ghana, Lindberg and Morrison (2008) demonstrate that rational evaluations of politics and policy outweigh 'non-evaluative' considerations, such as patronage or ethnic ties. Furthermore, Bratton, Bhavnani, and Chen's (2011) study of sixteen states shows that rational calculations about material welfare are at the forefront of voters' minds.

These results of these studies are mirrored in LeVan's (2019) analysis of the 2015 Nigerian election, which demonstrates that the APC's electoral success was contingent on the party presenting a variegated party program that focused, first and foremost, on economic policy. Using statistical analysis of

state-level data, LeVan shows that subjective evaluations of national economic performance and enthusiasm for the APC's economic promises systematically explain electoral outcomes across states. While the APC primed citizens to engage in economic voting, they simultaneously campaigned on electoral integrity and the issue of insecurity. According to LeVan (2019, 100), the APC built a coalition on the basis of parties and interests from different parts of the country, offering a 'new logic of coalition building based on issues and not just geography.' This is not to say that ethnic voting was absent from the 2015 election, particularly at the local level. Predictably, Buhari drew on support from the Hausa-Fulani and Islamic voters in the North. However, the APC received over 4.3 million votes in the south, while the PDP received over 3.8 million voters in the north, indicating that voters were motivated by factors other than ethnicity. We hypothesize that two years after the election, voters will base their satisfaction with democracy at least in part on their evaluation of how well the Buhari government has handled the economy and maintained domestic security.

Data and operationalization

We use the latest (seventh) round of the Afrobarometer survey carried out in Nigeria. The survey was conducted between April and May in 2017, two years after the 2015 general election that saw the ousting of the PDP from office for the first time in sixteen years. In governance terms, two years is sufficient time for the Buhari presidency to initiate, and possibly deliver, on its electoral promises, thereby giving survey respondents ample time to formulate opinions about the functionality of regime institutions, the trustworthiness of regime authorities, and the success or failure of the government to carry out its electoral program. Our dependent variable is satisfaction with democracy, measured on a four-point scale, where 1 = not at all satisfied and 4 = very satisfied.

We are particularly concerned with how territorial identities impact satisfaction with democracy and the potential trade-off between ethno-regional and national identities. The type of identity one has is indicative of their diffuse support for the political regime. Individuals who eschew national attachments are seen as lacking diffuse support. We operationalize the trade-off between ethnic and national identities using the Moreno question, which is frequently employed in surveys to ascertain the compatibility of sub-national and national identities, (see Moreno 2006; Llamazares and Reinares 1999; Brigeovich 2012). The Afrobarometer has adapted the Moreno question to the African context to read: 'Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a Nigerian and being a [respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?' Response options are 1) I feel only [respondent's ethnic group], 2) I feel more

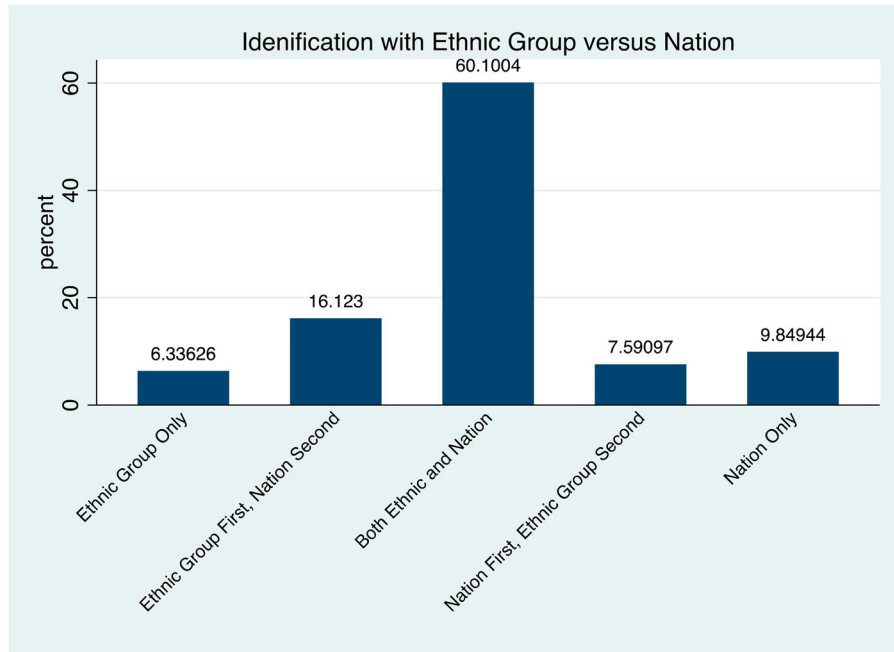
[respondent's ethnic group] than Nigerian, 3) I feel equally Nigerian and [respondent's ethnic group], 4) I feel more Nigerian than [respondent's ethnic group], and 5) I feel Nigerian only. Of the 1600 respondents in the survey, only six were unable to answer this question, (and were hence dropped from the analysis). We treat the Moreno question as a set of categorical variables, and use the dual identity category (option 3) as the baseline in our model, given that it is the most prevalent category in the sample.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondent answers across the five Moreno categories for the sample as a whole, while Figure 2 demonstrates how these responses are distributed across the three major and three minor ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani (27.12% of the sample), Yoruba (20.5%), Igbo (17%), Ijaw (2.19%), Kanuri (2.19%), Ibibio (2.19%), and Tiv (1.62%). Due to their small sample size, all other ethnic groups have been collapsed into the 'Other' category (27.19% of the sample).

Evident from Figure 1 is the fact that the majority of Nigerians (60%) reported having a dual identity in 2017. This conforms to identity patterns observed in other ethno-federal states. The second Moreno response option, feeling part of the ethnic group first and Nigerian second, is the second most prevalent option, although there is a large gap between respondents selecting the third and second category; only 16% of the sample reports being attached to ethnic group first and nation second. Exclusive ethno-regionalists are the smallest category (6%), and are only slightly surpassed by primary nationalists (7%) and exclusive nationalists (10%) in terms of group size.

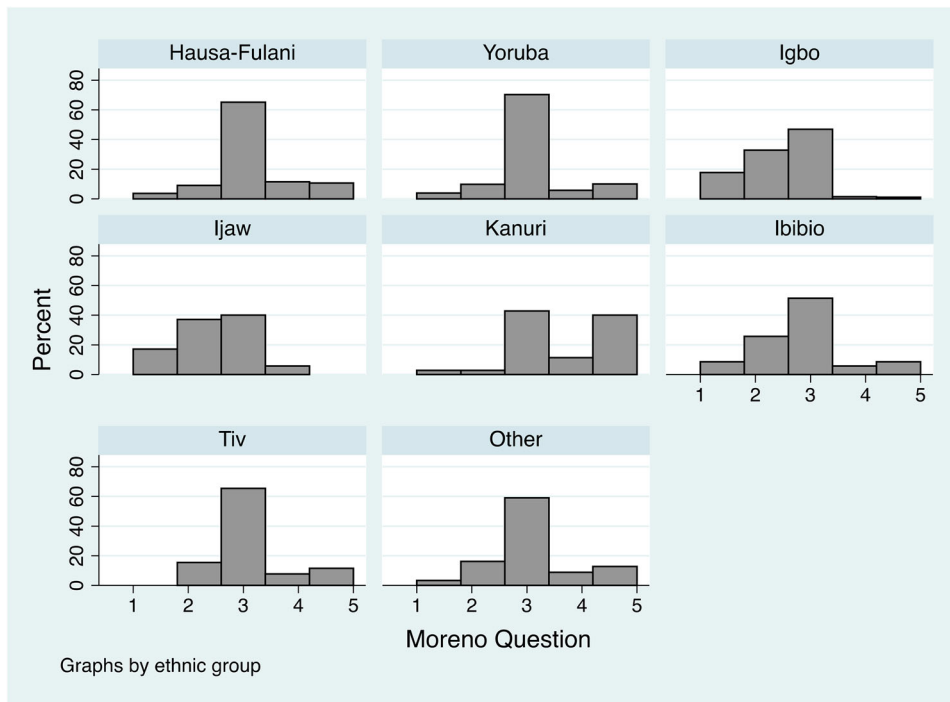
That being said, there is a stark difference in the distribution of responses across the various ethnic groups in Figure 2, which highlights a north-south identity divide, although not necessarily a Muslim-Christian divide. The Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba, the politically dominant groups, exhibit a commensurate amount of respondents in each of the five categories and are clearly the drivers of the response distribution in the overall sample: 65% of Hausa-Fulani and 70% of Yoruba report having a dual identity. Southern ethnic groups (Igbo, Ijaw, Ibibio), on the other hand, have the highest proportion of respondents selecting an exclusively ethnic or primarily ethnic identity: 17% of the Igbo claim to only feel attached to their ethnic group, while 33% claim attachment to their ethnic group first and Nigeria second. This comports with our theoretical expectations that previously oppressed ethnic groups are less likely to assimilate a national identity into their conceptions of self. To follow up on this point, we include a measure for how frequently the respondent thinks that their ethnic group has been treated unfairly (variable 'unfair ethnic treatment'), which is on a four-point scales, where 0 = never and 3 = always.

To evaluate specific support for the regime, we employ two sets of variables. The first set assesses trust in institutions and actors across various



Source: Afrobarometer 7, Nigeria

Figure 1. The moreno question in Nigeria.



Source: Afrobarometer 7, Nigeria

Figure 2. The moreno question by ethnic group.

territorial levels. We use a battery of five questions that ask respondents how much trust (0 = not at all; 3 = a lot) they have in the following institutions: the president, the National Assembly, the state governor, the state House of Assembly, and the local government council. As anticipated, there is a high degree of correlation in public trust across the five items, given that Nigerians are largely critical of corruption across all territorial levels of government. The strongest relationship is between trust, or lack thereof, between the governor and the state house (Pearson's $r = .67$), while the weakest is between trust in president and the local government ($r = .42$). Because we know that there is a degree of variation in how much trust Nigerians confer on these various territorial levels, we keep these five items distinct in the analysis. Based on the findings of Norris and Mattes (2013), we expect that trust in National Assembly is particularly consequential for satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria. We complement this battery of questions with two other variables. We include a general question about whether corruption has increased or decreased over the past year, where 1 = decreased a lot and 5 = increased a lot. Furthermore, given that electoral integrity was one of the pivotal issues during the 2015 campaign, we examine whether the respondent rates the previous national election as free and fair on a four-point scale, where higher values indicate a better rating.

The second set of variables focuses on evaluations of the government's performance in three policy areas: the economy, national security, and service provisions. As LeVan (2019) details, the first two policy areas were particularly important during the 2015 campaign. The economy was the most frequently invoked issue by the APC, while the PDP focused on national security and its proactive military strategy in combatting terrorist groups and ensuring a safe election. Hence, we expect that the government's performance in these two policy areas will have the greatest impact on satisfaction with democracy. We include the third policy area – the provision of state services, such as education and healthcare – as this constitutes one of the traditional staple issues in African elections (Norris and Mattes 2013; LeVan 2019).

We create three attitudinal scales based on a battery of items in the Afrobarometer survey that relate to government performance. Respondents are asked to assess how well they believe the current government is handling nineteen specific policy areas, where 1 = very badly and 4 = very well. Principal component analysis reveals that these items loads on two distinct factors: those dealing with economic issues, on the one hand, and all other issues, on the other. We take the average of all economic-related items in the 'economic performance scale,' which is composed of six attitudes relating to the government's performance in managing the economy, alleviating poverty, job creation, maintaining price stability, narrowing income inequality, and assuring food security. The variable's Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 indicates

very good internal consistency of the scale. Although the remaining thirteen items load on one factor, we isolate four policy areas that specifically deal with regime security, which we call the 'security performance scale'. The scale measures how well the government has performed in reducing crime, preventing political violence during elections, preventing or resolving violent conflict between communities, and countering political violence from armed extremist groups (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$). Our final scale, the 'services performance scale,' evaluates how well the government has performed in improving basic health services, addressing educational needs, providing water and sanitation services, and maintaining roads and bridges (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

Recall that our starting assumption is that satisfaction with democracy is a short-term expression of how well the government works in practice rather than general support for democracy as a political regime type. To probe the validity of this claim, we include three control variables that query whether respondents approve of alternatives to democracy, namely military rule, a one-party state, or a strongman that abolishes elections and the National Assembly. The three variables are on a five-point scale, where 1 = strongly disapprove and 5 = strongly approve. If it is the case that satisfaction with democracy is reflective of short-term evaluations of government performance, than these three variables should not reach statistical significance in our model.

Turning to our controls, we include a dummy variable for whether the respondent voted for the APC in the 2015 election, as satisfaction with democracy increases for those that have party identification with the incumbent government (Cho 2004). Studies show that economic utilitarianism, at both the individual and national levels, impacts support for the regime. The electorate rewards or punishes political authorities with its support as a function of personal or national economic conditions (Bellucci, Memoli, and Sanders 2012). We include the variable 'economic outlook' that charts whether the respondent thinks that their economy is very bad (1) or very good (5). Because the Afrobarometer does not query about income, we include an 'income proxy' variable, which is an aggregate of whether the respondents own one of these six items: radio, TV motor vehicle, computer, bank account, and mobile phone. As with the economic outlook variable, we anticipate that individuals who have more of these items are comparatively better off than those that do not, and this should translate into a more positive evaluation of democracy. We control for the level of education, which spans 1 = no formal education to 10 = post-graduate education. We predict that individuals with higher levels of education will be more aware of corruption and will, therefore, be less satisfied with democracy.

We control for whether the respondent is female and the type of religion they practice. We use Muslims as the baseline category, and include dummy

variables for Christians, 'other' religions, and the non-religious. We expect that Christians, who come from the historically disenfranchised southern regions, and who were more likely to vote for the PDP, will be less satisfied with democracy than other groups.

Descriptive statistics of our variables are presented in Table A in the Appendix.

Model and results

To test our hypotheses, we employ a two-level HLM that nests individuals within their ethnic groups. We retain the eight ethnic group categories presented in Figure 2. Although we presume that satisfaction with democracy varies significantly at the individual level, the distribution of Moreno identity categories across the eight groups shown in Figure 2 demonstrates that group-level characteristics may also provide important contexts that interact with individual attitudes. Specifically, southern ethnic groups (Igbo, Ijaw, Ibibio) are more likely to report having a dominant ethnic identity, which can potentially dampen satisfaction with democracy at a higher rate. To confirm that there is significant variation at the group level, we perform an analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the satisfaction with democracy variable. The variance components can be used to partition the variance across the two levels and give a better understanding of the relative importance of each level in the analysis. ANOVA testing reveals that 18% of the variance is at the ethnic group level and we can proceed with the multilevel modeling technique.

Before reporting our results, we carry out a test of multicollinearity, given that a number of variables may be closely related. For example, trust in the president may be highly correlated with voting for the APC. Likewise, feeling that one's ethnic group is treated unfairly may be more prevalent among respondents with a primarily ethnic identity, as reverting to a more lower-level territorial identity may be a reaction among disenfranchised groups to regain some control over their lives (Lawler 1992). The results of the test do not reveal any multicollinearity issues and all variables in the model have a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) score below 3.

The results of our random coefficients model are presented in Table 1. Additionally, because we are interested in the relative explanatory weight of territorial identity (i.e. diffuse support) vis-à-vis institutional trust and perceived government performance (i.e. specific support), we calculate the marginal effects of our variables. Table 2 reports the percent change in satisfaction with democracy when moving from the minimum to the maximum on each independent variable, with all other variables held at their means. If ethnic identity is indeed the dominant cleavage in the Nigerian political system, we should see that specific support variables hold much less

Table 1. Determinants of support for democracy (HLM).

Predictors	Estimates	Std. Err.
Constant	1.273**	0.184
Moreno: exclusively ethnic	-.233**	.094
Moreno: primarily ethnic	-.154**	.063
Moreno: dual (omitted)		
Moreno: primarily national	-.106	.086
Moreno: exclusively national	.081	.075
Unfair ethnic treatment	-.042 ^o	.025
Trust in President	.047 ^o	.027
Trust in National Assembly	.058 ^o	.032
Trust in State Governor	.085**	.029
Trust in state House of Assembly	.011	.033
Trust in local government	.086**	.031
Corruption assessment	-.037*	.019
Perceived electoral fairness	.110**	.024
Economic performance scale	.153**	.044
Security performance scale	-.034	.041
Services performance scale	.041	.041
Support military rule	-.017	.016
Support one-party rule	.031 ^o	.019
Support strongman	-.011	.018
Vote for APC	-.007	.054
Economic outlook	.113**	.018
Income proxy	.014	.010
Education	-.002	.013
Female dummy	-.050	.044
Christian dummy	-.115 ^o	.060
Other religion dummy	-.241	.237
Non-religious dummy	.336	.275
Variance components		
Ethnic group level (8 groups)	.001	.002
Individual level	.632	.024
N	1,436	

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ^o $p < 0.1$.

predictive power than diffuse support variables. On the other hand, if LeVan's (2019) assessment of the Nigerian election holds several years later, then satisfaction with democracy should be contingent at least in part on perceptions of the government's performance, particularly in the economic realm.

The results largely conform to theoretical expectations that both diffuse and specific support are essential to understanding the motivating factors for satisfaction with democracy. Territorial identity, institutional trust, and evaluations of government performance, broadly speaking, all have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable, while most control variables fail to reach statistical significance.

We turn first to our measures of diffuse support and the Moreno question. As in the case of prior studies that investigate ethno-regional identities in federalized states (Llamazares and Reinares 1999; Brigeovich 2012), a dominant ethnic identity depresses satisfaction with democracy. The results show that respondents with an exclusively ethnic identity are the least likely to

Table 2. Marginal effects of predictors on satisfaction with democracy, percent change of moving from minimum to maximum.

Predictors	% change
Moreno: exclusively ethnic	-10.09
Moreno: primarily ethnic	-6.58
Moreno: dual (omitted)	
Moreno: primarily national	-4.39
Moreno: exclusively national	3.95
Unfair ethnic treatment	-5.48
Trust in President	6.32
Trust in National Assembly	7.84
Trust in State Governor	11.76
Trust in state House of Assembly	1.54
Trust in local government	11.72
Corruption assessment	-6.26
Perceived electoral fairness	15.97
Economic performance scale	21.04
Security performance scale	-4.46
Services performance scale	5.52
Support military rule	-2.99
Support one-party rule	5.53
Support strongman	-1.83
Vote for APC	-0.26
Economic outlook	21.36
Income proxy	7.92
Education	-1.70
Female dummy	-2.12
Christian dummy	-4.90
Other religion dummy	-10.26
Non-religious dummy	14.27

be satisfied with democracy when compared to dual identitarians (baseline), followed by respondents with a primarily ethnic identity. Both of these Moreno categories have coefficients that are negative and significant at the .01 level. At the same time, there is no significant difference between the dual identitarians and those respondents with a primarily or exclusively national identity. The dividing line in Nigeria appears to be between those that prioritize their ethnicity, on the one hand, and those that combine their ethnic identity with a national identity in equal or lesser measure, on the other. [Table 2](#) demonstrates that individuals with an exclusively ethnic identity are 10% less satisfied with democracy than dual identitarians, while those with a primarily ethnic identity are about seven percent less satisfied.

Feeling that one's ethnic group has been treated unfairly in the past fails to reach statistical significance at the .05 level, but does so at the .1 level. As one would predict, ethnic grievances make individuals less satisfied with democracy. We know that the southern ethnic groups are most likely to feel aggrieved, historically, and that these are precisely the groups that have a dominant ethnic identity. Therefore, we investigate the degree of conceptual overlap between the Moreno categories and perceived unfair treatment by

examining the correlation coefficients of the variables. We see that exclusively and primarily ethnic identities are positively correlated with ethnic grievances, (Pearson's $r = .24$ and $.19$, respectively), while dual identity is negatively correlated ($r = -.23$). The remaining two categories have only weak negative correlations of $r = -.03$. Hence, we have sufficient evidence that three of the Moreno categories are related to ethnic grievances. And, Lawler (1992) appears to be correct – feelings of political discontent result in the (re)-assertion of lower-level identities. Following this, we run the same HLM model but without the Moreno categories. Results are presented in Table B in the Appendix. In this model, the unfair ethnic treatment variable does reach statistical significance at the .01 level, and its marginal effect decreases from -5.5% in the original model to -7.7% in the new model. So, while there is evidence that a strong ethnic identity and ethnic grievances are related, and both impact satisfaction with democracy, the Moreno categories are still stronger predictors, given that just the single exclusive ethnicity variable decreases satisfaction by 10%.

Next we turn to specific support and institutional trust. Surprisingly, neither trust in the president nor the national assembly variables reach statistical significance at the .05 level, (although they are significant at the .1 level), while trust in the state House fails to reach significance altogether. Conversely, greater trust in the state governor and the local government significantly increases satisfaction with democracy. For both variables, individuals who have no trust in these actors are roughly 12% less satisfied with democracy than those that have the most trust. These results suggest that individuals may associate regime performance more directly with actors that are the most visible to them in their region and daily lives, while actors from higher-level, more distant institutions may escape greater scrutiny.

Nonetheless, we explore further why trust in the president and the National Assembly are such weak predictors. First, it is possible that the 'vote for APC' dummy, although not statistically significant in the model, may be so highly correlated with institutional trust that it reduces the precision of these estimates. After all, we know that sharing party affiliation with the incumbent government increases satisfaction with democracy (Cho 2004). Hence, a vote for the APC may naturally translate into greater support for Buhari and APC members of the National Assembly. However, when we remove the APC dummy from the model (results not shown here), this does not change the results. Second, we evaluate the relationship between institutional trust and the corruption assessment variable, which is significant and negative. Respondents who feel that corruption has increased a lot during the past year are 6% less likely to be satisfied with democracy than those that feel it has decreased a lot. Perhaps this general assessment of corruption is linked directly to institutional actors at the higher levels of

government. Yet, as is the case with the APC dummy, removing the corruption variable from the model, (results not shown here), does not strengthen the predictive power of the trust in the president and National Assembly variables, but rather weakens it. This implies that individuals do assess the prevalence of corruptive practices across various levels of government independently of one another. Third, as with the unfair ethnic treatment variable, we examine what happens to presidential and National Assembly trust when we remove the Moreno categories from the equation. We can now clearly see in Table B that both variables are statistically significant at the .05 level and positive, and their marginal effect is roughly 8% for both. This corroborates LeVan's (2019) findings that ethnic voting still occurs to a notable degree in Nigeria, as respondents with a primarily ethnic identity are more likely to come from southern groups (Igbo, Ijaw, Ibibio) that would be less inclined to vote for Buhari and the APC.

Looking at our measures of specific support and perceived government performance, we see that only the economic performance scale reaches statistical significance. Along with the economic outlook variable, this measure has the greatest impact in the model. Respondents who feel that the government has done a very good job addressing economic issues are 21% more satisfied with democracy than those who feel it has done very poorly. The same goes for respondents who feel that the economy is doing great as opposed to poorly. These results clearly show that although ethnicity is still a meaningful cleavage in Nigerian politics, it is not the only dominant cleavage. In fact, it appears that Nigeria has accomplished what Horowitz (1985) predicted would be a rare feat in African states: incorporating a new cleavage into politics and thereby transitioning to a multi-ethnic or non-ethnic system. Given that the economy was the most discussed issue in the 2015 election, and the APC's signature issue, it is not surprising that the security and services performance scales fail to impact the dependent variable.

Finally, we examine the rest of our control variables. Importantly, none of the alternatives to democracy variables reach statistical significance, underscoring our starting assumption that satisfaction with democracy is more appropriately a measure of short-term evaluations of the regime's performance rather than the desirability of democracy as a political regime type. The income proxy variable is not statistically significant, albeit the measure is not a very sophisticated one, and indicators that more directly reflect household income may produce more fruitful results. Similarly, education and gender do not condition democratic satisfaction, and only the Christian dummy reaches significance at the .1 level. Notably, Christians are marginally less likely than Muslims to be satisfied with democracy, which is to be expected given the prevalence of the Christian-Muslim divide in Nigerian politics and Buhari hailing from the Muslim north (LeVan 2019).

We perform one final robustness check. Our random intercepts model assumes that the eight ethnic groups under analysis may have varying starting points for satisfaction with democracy, which may or may not be statistically significant. We know that certain ethnic groups (Igbo, Ijaw, Ibibio) are more likely to exhibit a dominant ethnic identity, which may render them less satisfied vis-à-vis the historically politically dominant groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba). To investigate the relationship between group-level ethnic identity and democratic satisfaction, we run a regular OLS regression model that incorporates ethnic group dummies alongside our independent variables. We use the Hausa-Fulani, the most dominant group, as the baseline category. The results in Table C (Appendix) clearly demonstrate that there is not a statistically significant difference in democratic satisfaction between the Hausa-Fulani and the other major and minor ethnic groups, although in most cases the ethnic group coefficients are negative. Barring the Kanuri, the ethnic group associated with Buhari's maternal ancestry, the other ethnic groups are marginally less satisfied with democracy. That being said, the 'other ethnic groups' category is significantly less satisfied with democracy than the Hausa-Fulani, highlighting that smaller minority groups with even more limited access to the political system are less content with the day-to-day functioning of the regime.

Conclusion and discussion

In this analysis, we set out to explore the factors that determine satisfaction with democracy in Nigeria by employing Easton's framework of diffuse versus specific support for political systems. Our multilevel analysis of Afrobarometer data clearly shows that both diffuse and specific support are instrumental to understand satisfaction with democracy. As in other federalized states, a dominant ethnic identity depresses democratic satisfaction, and is particularly prevalent among ethnic groups with historical grievances against the center. Conversely, individuals that combine their ethnic and national identities in equal measure, and those that express a dominant national identity, are more satisfied with democracy. We attribute this to Lawler's (1992) 'proximal' rule, which posits that individuals tend to identify with those units that give them the most sense of control over their daily lives, thereby generating positive emotions. In the context of Nigeria, ethnic groups that have historically been excluded from the political sphere (Igbo, Ijaw, Ibibio) are less likely to incorporate a national identity, and thereby are less satisfied with the democratic process. The challenge for Nigerian state-building, moving forward, is to provide avenues for historically aggrieved ethnic groups to impact the political system.

The news is not all bad, however, as ethnic identification is only one part of the larger puzzle of satisfaction with democracy. We find that specific support is also a significant predictor of democratic satisfaction, and that it carries as

much weight, if not greater, than diffuse support. Trust in the state governor and the local government are particularly consequential for democratic satisfaction, and both are largely unrelated to ethnicity. On the other hand, trust in the president and the national assembly do appear to be informed, at least in part, by ethnic identity. That being said, at the group level, there is no statistical difference between the Hausa-Fulani, the presently dominant political group, and the other major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo) and minor ethnic groups (Ijaw, Ibibio, Tiv, Kanuri) in satisfaction with democracy. More hearteningly, evaluations of the government's performance in the realm of economic policy is the largest predictor of democratic satisfaction. As LeVan (2019) details in his analysis of the 2015 election, a political platform that focused on economic reform was the single most important reason behind the newly-formed APC's win over the establishment party, the PDP. Our results corroborate his point that Nigeria is moving away from ethnic politics and is in the process of transforming into a multiethnic system where the economic cleavage co-exists along the ethnic cleavage.

In this analysis, due to space constraints, we treat territorial identities as fixed. However, a deeper look at multiple waves of Afrobarometer data in Nigeria from 2005 (third wave) to 2017 (the present wave), reveals that there is a great deal of fluctuation over time in the proportion of respondents that report having a dual identity, (see Figure A in the Appendix). While a dominant ethnic identity has been on the decline since 2005, the prevalence of dual identity vis-a-vis a dominant national identity varies significantly over time. In fact, in 2015, leading up to the general election, a dominant national identity overtook dual identity as the most prevalent identity type. This indicates that territorial identities in Nigeria are not fixed, and further studies would benefit from evaluating the factors that condition this fluctuation. Perhaps a dominant national identity flourishes when citizens feel that the political and economic situation in their country is on track. Conversely, when the government performs poorly in delivering on the citizens' demands, individuals may revert to their lower-level, ethno-regional identities, as Lawler's proximal rule predicts. From this perspective, there may be a reciprocal relationship between diffuse and specific support that warrants closer investigation, both in Nigeria specifically and in other states in Africa.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix

Table A. Descriptive statistics.

Variables	Mean	St. Dev	Min	Max	N
Satisfaction with democracy	2.242	0.969	1	4	1580
Moreno: exclusively ethnic	0.063	0.244	0	1	1594
Moreno: primarily ethnic	0.161	0.368	0	1	1594
Moreno: dual	0.601	0.490	0	1	1594
Moreno: primarily national	0.076	0.265	0	1	1594
Moreno: exclusively national	0.098	0.298	0	1	1594
Unfair ethnic treatment	0.819	0.968	0	3	1586
Trust in President	1.435	1.194	0	3	1592
Trust in National Assembly	0.881	0.946	0	3	1583
Trust in State Governor	1.273	1.064	0	3	1589
Trust in state House of Assembly	1.008	0.953	0	3	1581
Trust in local government	0.973	0.963	0	3	1582
Corruption assessment	3.158	1.374	1	5	1592
Perceived electoral fairness	2.913	1.010	1	4	1579
Economic performance scale	1.760	0.706	1	4	1599
Security performance scale	2.403	0.777	1	4	1599
Services performance scale	2.323	0.758	1	4	1599
Support military rule	2.133	1.407	1	5	1586
Support one-party rule	1.859	1.222	1	5	1593
Support strongman	2.055	1.289	1	5	1593
Vote for APC	0.256	0.437	0	1	1600
Economic outlook	2.435	1.451	1	5	1599
Income proxy	7.017	2.874	0	12	1533
Education	4.515	2.149	0	9	1596
Female dummy	1.499	0.500	1	2	1600
Christian dummy	0.554	0.497	0	1	1600
Other religion dummy	0.008	0.086	0	1	1600
Non-religious dummy	0.007	0.083	0	1	1600

Table B. Determinants of satisfaction with democracy, Moreno question omitted (HLM).

Predictors	Estimates	Std. Err.
Constant	1.161**	0.181
Unfair ethnic treatment	−.061**	.024
Trust in President	.055*	.027
Trust in National Assembly	.062*	.032
Trust in State Governor	.089**	.029
Trust in state House of Assembly	.016	.033
Trust in local government	.076**	.031
Corruption assessment	−.038*	.019
Perceived electoral fairness	.120**	.024

(Continued)

Table B. Continued.

Predictors	Estimates	Std. Err.
Economic performance scale	.153**	.044
Security performance scale	-.030	.041
Services performance scale	.039	.041
Support military rule	-.016	.016
Support one-party rule	.033 ^o	.019
Support strongman	-.009	.018
Vote for APC	.006	.054
Economic outlook	.116**	.018
Income proxy	.015	.010
Education	-.000	.013
Female dummy	-.041	.044
Christian dummy	-.109 ^o	.060
Other religion dummy	-.211	.238
Non-religious dummy	.291	.274
Variance components		
Ethnic group level (8 groups)	.001	.002
Individual level	.638	.024
N	1,437	

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ^o $p < 0.1$.

Table C. OLS regression of satisfaction with democracy, ethnic group dummies included.

Predictors	Estimates	Std. Err.
Constant	1.331**	0.189
Moreno: exclusively ethnic	-.247**	.096
Moreno: primarily ethnic	-.154*	.064
Moreno: dual (omitted)		
Moreno: primarily national	-.104	.087
Moreno: exclusively national	.080	.077
Unfair ethnic treatment	-.042 ^o	.026
Trust in President	.047 ^o	.027
Trust in National Assembly	.061 ^o	.032
Trust in State Governor	.082**	.030
Trust in state House of Assembly	.012	.034
Trust in local government	.085**	.031
Corruption assessment	-.037*	.019
Perceived electoral fairness	.107**	.025
Economic performance scale	.146**	.045
Security performance scale	-.033	.041
Services performance scale	.042	.042
Support military rule	-.017	.017
Support one-party rule	.029	.020
Support strongman	-.010	.019
Vote for APC	-.006	.055
Economic outlook	.113**	.019
Income proxy	.013	.010
Education	.000	.013
Female dummy	-.050	.045
Christian dummy	-.079	.069
Other religion dummy	-.228	.241
Non-religious dummy	.296	.281
Yoruba	-.043	.085
Igbo	-.030	.104
Ijaw	-.019	.033

(Continued)

Table C. Continued.

Predictors	Estimates	Std. Err.
Kanuri	.125	.157
Ibibio	-.073	.168
Tiv	-.084	.182
Other ethnic groups	-.156*	.076
N	1,436	
R-squared	.32	
Adjusted R-squared	.31	

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ° $p < 0.1$.

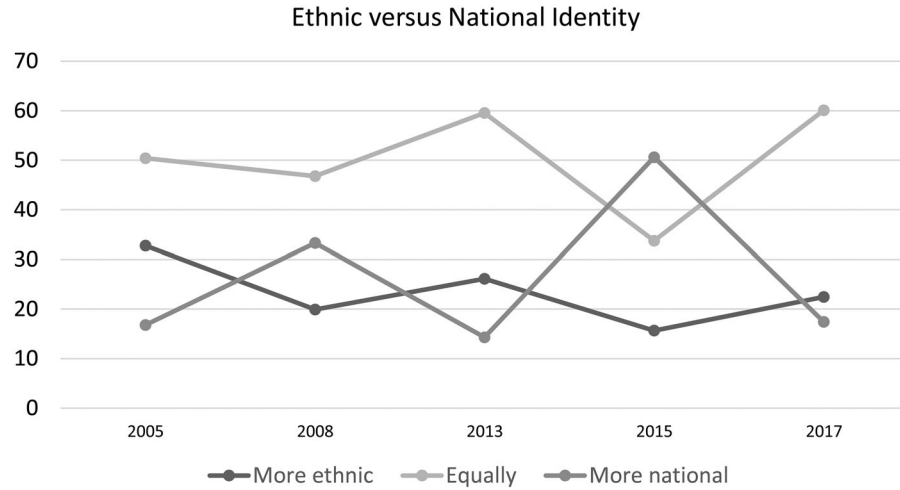


Figure A. Moreno Question over Time. *Source:* Afrobarometer 3-7. *Note:* ‘More ethnic’ is a combination of ‘exclusively ethnic’ and ‘primarily ethnic’ categories. ‘More national’ is a combination of ‘primarily national’ and ‘exclusively national’ categories.