The Republic of Cameroon

Democracy, Civil Society and Governance in Africa
Case Study on Assessing the progress Made by Cameroon

By: Finlay Sama Doh

Cameroon
2002
## Contents Table

1. Preface ................................................................................................................. 3
2. Cameroon ............................................................................................................. 3
3. Democracy ........................................................................................................... 3
5. From Ahidjo To Biya: The Transfer Of Power, 1982 ........................................ 6
7. The State Under Pressure 1986-1990 ................................................................. 8
8. Cameroon’s Declining Economy ..................................................................... 9
9. Global Politics And Domestic Demands For Reform ..................................... 10
11. Civil Society In Africa ....................................................................................... 11
12. Public Sector Partnership With The Private Sector And Civil Society .......... 13
13. Governance ...................................................................................................... 13
14. Why The Rush For Governance In Africa ..................................................... 14
1. Preface

This paper is divided into three sub-divisions in tackling the questions under consideration:

The first part attempts to present Cameroon as a unique state in Africa - it had three successive colonial masters each influencing the intricacy of a three-stage movement since 1960-1961 independence.

The second part is an attempt to situate democracy, civil society and governance as conceived in an African context.

The last part presents an overview of the popular struggle for developed freedom, since 1990 to attain democracy and freedom.

2. Cameroon

Cameroon’s recent experience remains by and large anonymous, specially in the English speaking world, despite the struggles of the opposition groups against the regime since 1990. More familiar to the outside world are the democratic struggles in Nigeria (Ogon State), Rwanda, Zaire (now the Republic of Congo) and South Africa. Cameroon is more than the size of the state of California and has more than 240 ethnic groups, and suffered under three successive colonial powers (German, English and French) before 1960. By 1977, Cameroon’s population was about 14 million with an annual growth rate of 2.9 percent (Dept. of Statistics and National Accounts). There are ten provinces, eight of which were former French administration and two of which former British administration. Four of these provinces (North-West, South-West, Littoral and West) constituted the most volatile during the struggle for democracy and freedom since 1990.

This paper examines the struggles for multi-partyism and good governance against the hegemonic rule of the former President, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1960-1982). Cameroon’s ethnic and cultural diversities and colonial legacies have greatly influenced the process of state formation and its nature.

3. Democracy

In Africa, the idea of “democracy” becomes popular when one regime is replaced by another. If we use Abraham Lincoln’s definition of democracy i.e., “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” it could be noted that our African leaders embraced just the first part. “In which case the colonial rule was inherently conceived as authoritarian in all its manifestations. Consequently, it had to be replaced by government of the people.”

The word democracy has come from the Greek word, “demostratos”. The first syllable – “demos” – refers to the body of all the citizens in a country. The second, “Kratos”, relates to either power or rule. It is therefore possible that power could be in the hands of certain individuals, who, at the same time are not actually ruling in the official sense. It is, thus, very necessary before passing any judgment about a political system, one should know where real power resides and how it is exercised.
Cameroon from 1884-1916 was a German protectorate. After the first World War, Cameroon was divided into two separate League of Nations Mandated territories, one part under the French administration and the other under the British government. In 1946, after the Second World War, the mandated territories became U.N. Trust Territories but remained under the same colonial masters. The French government administered eighty percent of the territory and the British government twenty percent.

In 1957, French Cameroon gained her autonomy from the French which led to its independence in 1960. The United Nations on February 11, 1961, organized a referendum for the British Cameroon to determine whether Northern Cameroon would like to remain part of Nigeria and the Southern part would be integrated with the now Republic of Cameroon – former French Cameroon. The Northern part of Cameroon, which had ethnic ties and even parental lineage with Nigeria, opted to remain as part of it and the same phenomenon prevailed in the south thus leading the former British Cameroon to further split into two.

All these events have influenced the way Cameroonians tend to think of themselves. Some leaders have been very authoritarian, some very patrimonial and others give the impression of being nationalists. There has been a history of struggle since 1945. The “Union Populaire du Cameroun” (U.P.C.) first fought against the French colonial power to gain independence. Later, in 1957, the French Government appointed former President Ahmadou Ahidjo as head of state and he fought and eclipsed the U.P.C. in the 1960s. In 1966, Ahmadou Ahidjo succeeded in establishing a one-party system – Cameroon National Union (C.N.U.). A referendum on May 20, 1972, transformed Cameroon from a Federal Republic into a unitary state – United Republic of Cameroon. For Ahidjo, the creation of C.N.U. party represented an important milestone in the kind of “democracy” he hoped to create in Cameroon, and a critical step in maximizing his power and authority.

Domestic peace was enforced and politics centralized using the emergency power (pleins pouvoirs) designed to rule by decree which was passed by the assembly in March 1960. French troops were stationed in Yaounde to suppress any resistance to his philosophy of one state. One of the most effective intelligence services in sub-Saharan Africa, the “Service des Etudes et de la Documentation” (SEDOC) was established and it was used as an instrument of the government. Richard Joseph pointed out that The actual task of destroying the revolutionary marquis was only one side of French military activities in Cameroon up to the Mid-1960s. The other side was building and giving practical experience to a Cameroon national army, while making that army wholly subservient to the political will of the Head of State.

French military support was not limited to the elimination of Ahidjo’s rivals in Cameroon but even abroad. In November 1960, one of the key U.P.C leaders Felix Roland Moumie was assassinated in Switzerland by William Betchel, a French secret service agent. Ahamdou Ahidjo also used his power to postpone elections.

In July 1972 a constitutional amendment was made and this was mainly meant to establish a military state which also led to the elimination of the post of vice-presidency and the post of prime minister of East and West Cameroon thus making the end of the federal structure of Cameroon. Ahamdon Ahidjo centralized power and ruled the country for over two decades with iron hands.
4. **Ahidjo’s Presidential Monarchy 1972-1982**

President Ahidjo proved to be as persuasive and effective in replacing the federal structure with the unitary state structure in 1972 as when he created Cameroon’s single party in the mid-1960s. He argued that the federal structure was costly since it required financial support for four separate legislature: a 100-member legislature for East Cameroon, a 37-member Assembly and 26-member House of Chiefs in West Cameroon.

A referendum was approved by 99.99 percent (3,177,846 for and 176 against) of the votes cast. The United Republic was formally ushered in, on 2 June, 1972, by Decree Nº72/270. According to Bayart, the promulgation of the unitary constitution was “the logical crowning of the twin process of harmonizing the administration of the two federal states and maximizing of presidential powers.”

In order to achieve both objectives, Ahidjo employed and perfected the various strategies that had been instrumental in the formation of a single-party state and the creation of the United Republic. Some of the strategies used were coalition building, repression, and the establishment of a highly centralized administration which vested most of the decision making power in the president and also all administrative decision – making processes were centralized in Yaounde and concentrated in the office of the presidency.

Centralization also gave the president tremendous authority over most aspects of politics, both at the domestic and the international levels. Under article 8 of the constitution, the president had the sole authority to appoint and terminate the terms of office of all his ministers and vice-ministers without the approval of the legislature. He appointed his ministers, his governors, and his judges alone and they in turn were directly responsible and entirely dependent upon him. The National Assembly did not have any role in the process and thus could not exert any pressure on it (Mark Delancey).

Whereas in the former federal structure, some administrative functions were carried out by the prime minister and various state legislatures, almost all decisions now emanated from the presidency in Yaounde. Mbu Etonga notes that Ahidjo’s control of all aspects of government was so complete that members of parliament were not even aware that they had the right to initiate legislation. By contrast, the president was not accountable to anyone.

There was press censorship. The government used “SEDOC” to report on anyone who tried to oppose the presidency. The governors, senior divisional officers, the divisional officers and sub-divisional officers had the obligation to censor and seize all controversial or malicious articles within the country. If any of such articles were thought to be provocative, the person or persons involved would immediately be rounded up by a special military police unit (B.M.M.) and whisked to Yaounde for a summary trial – only God would know what could happen to them.

Once the government had taken a stand on an issue the judiciary would not have the right to change that decision. The magistrates and judges were there just for rubber stamping.

Frequent cabinet changes also provided Ahidjo with opportunity to replace those who may have consciously or inadvertently tried to upstage or to undermine the authority of the president. That explains the dismissal and subsequent arrest in November 1966 of Victor Kanga, Minister of information and Tourism, for publishing information detrimental to the
regime. He was tried, found guilty and sentenced for four years imprisonment. Prof. Bernard Fonlon, one of the most educated members of Ahidjo’s Cabinet and a strong proponent of bilingualism, was also dismissed just before the creation of the United Republic because he was considered to be too “independent” and outspoken. In 1978, Vroumsia Tchinaye, Minister of public service and northerner who was very close to Ahidjo since the 1960s, was removed from a cabinet post for criticizing the president by saying that he was always “consulting Paris” before making decisions and for employing a large number of French citizens (14000) to work in Cameroon.

Governors, high-ranking military and police officers and administrators frequently moved between command sites for the same reason. The only exception was Governor Ousman Mey of North Province who remained in office from 1972 to 1983 when President Paul Biya deposed him. The Northern Province was later carved into three provinces in 1984 by the current president. To prevent any threat from the military, Ahidjo compartmentalized the various units (army, navy, police, air force, gendarmerie and the republican guard) and put them under separate leaderships, and coordinated from the presidency by his close ally Sadou Daoudou, a Muslim northerner, for two decades.

Elections were also excellent opportunities for the president and members of the C.N.U. Political Bureau to extend patronage by rewarding supporters with seats in the legislature and other important party offices. Elections under the single-party system were simply occasions for Cameroonians to approve candidates who had been enlisted by the president and the Political Bureau.

The actual task of maintaining the state of fear was largely in the hands of two well-organized and tightly controlled units: SEDOC and the Brigades Mixtes Mobiles (B.M.M.). While the former served as the political police responsible for spying on potential enemies of the regime, the BMM maintained sites of torture where physical punishment was used to extract confessions from suspects. This was done in violation of the Human Rights Charter.

However, supporters of Ahidjo’s regime claimed that all of the aforementioned mechanisms (centralization, patronage and the use of force and intimidation) contributed to Cameroon’s political stability at a time when other countries on the continent were rocked by civil war and other forms of instability. Ahidjo resigned for health reasons on the 4 November, 1982.

5. From Ahidjo To Biya: The Transfer Of Power, 1982

On 4 November, 1982, President Ahidjo surprised every Cameroonian when at the 8 p.m. news-cast he announced his decision to relinquish his power as head of state. Two days later the then Prime Minister, Paul Biya, was sworn into office as President, Ahidjo’s constitutional successor. The peaceful transfer of power projected Cameroon’s image as one of African’s most politically stable nation. This was similar to what one of his closest friends, Léopold Senghor, did in 1980.

Prime Minister Paul Biya, when he became president, promised to follow the footsteps of his predecessor. However, unlike his predecessor, he was prepared to create a new society where there would be greater degree of tolerance, individual liberty and free exchange of ideas. Ahidjo’s exit was greeted with a relief by those who saw him as a dictator and French puppet. His choice of Biya, a Southern Christian from Beti ethnic group, was not popular, especially among a large section of northern Muslims within the administration and the C.N.U. party.

Some evidence suggested Ahidjo’s determination to ensure a peaceful and successful transfer of power to his prime minister, despite opposition from some members of the C.N.U. Central Committee. President Ahidjo sent emissaries to the Bamileke business community to appease them on President Biya’s call for greater liberalization and democratization, and his appeal for “rigor” and “moralization.” Both concepts were supposed to form the foundation of the New Deal society he hoped to establish in Cameroon. President Biya in many of his speeches always showed his loyalty to Ahidjo as the father of the nation.

Unfortunately, a less cordial relationship emerged in 1983. As Ahidjo continued to be the chairman of the C.N.U. and Biya the President, there was an overt struggle for supremacy after the former had regained his health. The first opportunity for President Paul Biya to establish his independence and authority occurred in the early 1983, when he solicited but failed to follow Ahidjo’s recommendations on a cabinet reshuffle. There was now a growing rift between the two leaders. Ahidjo as C.N.U. chairman actively campaigned in May 24, 1983.

President Biya also used the cabinet change to address Ahidjo’s claim regarding the primacy of the party over the state. He however indicated that the constitution, which was considered to be the most important document, clearly established the primacy of the state over political parties. It was stated therein that it is the president of the Republic who determines policy of the nation. The same constitution provides that political parties and groups may take part in elections. This instrument which is the fundamental law of the Nation defines the power of the state over political parties.

President Ahmadou Ahidjo tried in several ways to mobilize the northern minister against President Biya but failed. Biya had created two other provinces from just one northern province (Adamoua and Extreme-North province) that had existed from the colonial period. Ahmadou Ahidjo failed on every front and finally decided to depart to France after fermenting and plotting a coup d’Etat. In a radio broadcast to the nation on 22 August, 1983, Biya announced the discovery of a plot against “the security of the state”, implicating the former president and two close aides, Major Ibrahim Oumarou and Captain Adamou Salatou. The president also used the occasion to effect major changes. There was a cabinet reshuffle in a period of three to four months. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense were replaced by Christians: Ayang Luc, from the North, as head of government, and a Beti Gilbert Andze Tsoungui from the president’s ethnic group as defense minister. This was followed by massive administrative transfers. The number of provinces increased from seven to ten. Six of the former seven governors were changed; and thirty-six of the forty-nine senior divisional officers (Prefects) were replaced. The divided military structure was now brought under a single command headed by General Pierre Semengue (a Beti from the President’s ethnic group) who became the chief of staff. Three other generals were now appointed (one from the North, the other from the Bamileke region, and a third one from the anglophone provinces).

One more episode intervened before Biya consolidated his presidency. On 6 April, 1984, the nation was faced with a serious political crisis. A faction of the military, consisting of the northerners from the elite of the Republican Guard, gerdarmarie, army and police, staged a **coup d’état**, but was quickly crushed.
President Biya emerged as a bruised man and made sure that such incidents would never repeat. He surrounded himself with trusted friends mostly of his ethnic group – Beti. He now was making all possible attempts to consolidate his power and presidency. He forgot his slogan, ‘Rigor and Moralization’ (the cornerstone of the New Deal Policy). Some even thought that he backpedaled on his incipient liberalization moves, muzzled the press, institutionalized presidential patronage and thus created an autocratic government. With the Beti popularity guaranteed superiority and a buoyant economy, it was time for “chop chop”. Although this was never the intention of the president.

About ninety percent of state institutions and parastatals had new new faces made of politicians, administrators and academicians. More than just political and constitutional reforms, Biya’s presidency was characterized by the vision of a humane and “democratic” society. The foundation of such a society would be based on ‘Communal Liberalism’ defined as a National Charter of Freedom. ‘Communal Liberalism’ meant addressing the socio-economic inequalities and, the National ‘charter of Freedom’, which guaranteed all forms of individual and collective freedoms including freedom of thought and expression, equal protection before the law, the secularity of the state and the abolition of all forms of racial or ethnic discrimination.

In 1985, there were more than twelve independent newspapers some of which were very critical of the government for not having been serious about its pledges to the population. Books banned during Ahidjo’s reign were now allowed to appear in the market.

7. The State Under Pressure 1986-1990

When President Biya took over the presidency many saw him as a savior who would take the masses away from the darkness of two decades of dictatorship to the brightness of political liberalism and economic prosperity, comparing him to other young progressive presidents like Abdou Diof in Senegal and Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso whose rise to power had led to significant political changes in their countries. Cameroonians instead became very disenchanted with the slow pace and the inability of the president to live up to his slogans and promises. It was now clear that many of the reforms the president had designed in his earlier years in power were meant to prevent Ahidjo’s supporter to work for his return.

The momentary relaxation of censorship was reinstated by the Minister of Home Affairs on November 1983. This was because of the way and manner in which the independent press reported on the rift between president Biya and his predecessor. In June, 1986, several anglophone journalists were arrested for making derogatory remarks about the government. Popular radio programs like “Cameroon Report” and “Minute by Minute” that often examined critical issues facing the nation were banned for criticizing the government. Dr. Joseph Sende, a medical practitioner in Yaounde, was arrested for filing a suit requesting the administration to repeal the ban on U.P.C. party. People were arrested and tortured and detained thus totally disregarding the law.

In May, 1988, a famous Cameroonian musician, Koko Ateba, a Beti, was arrested and charged with singing a song deemed insulting to the presidential couple. Albert Mukong, a anglophone Human Rights activist and politician, was arrested in June 1988 following a B.B.C. interview that criticized frequent constitutional changes in Cameroon and attributed the economic demise to problems of embezzlement of public funds by government officials. He was later released in May 1989. There was now no freedom of assembly and association
as articulated in the president’s National Charter of Freedom. Professor Kofele-Kale of the University of California (Political Scientist) might have voiced the opinion and disappointment of most Cameroonians when he noted that instead of bringing into his administration new and fresh faces and a shared vision of free and democratic Cameroon, Biya relied heavily on Ahidjo loyalists who had “turned the first two decades of Cameroon’s post reunification history into a painful nightmare”. Another betrayal of the New Deal was Biya’s failure to eliminate tribalism, favoritism and all forms of division that threatened national unity.

The president could have been genuinely interested in promoting unity but, some members of his ethnic group saw the transfer of power simply as an opportunity to promote “ethnofascism”, a means for the Beti group to benefit from state patronage. The anglophones were marginalized. The Bamilekes, who controlled the economy, accused the administration for trying to force them out of business by giving more opportunities to the Beti businessmen. Nantang Jua puts it in a better way when he said that some “bare feet suddenly turned into millionaires”. Beti businessmen were granted import-export licenses and capital in an effort to give them a considerable share of the nation’s lucrative import market.

8. Cameroon’s Declining Economy

President Biya inherited a strong and healthy economy when he came to power in November 1982. Cameroon’s economic growth rate was 7 percent and, external debts of about US$2.3 billion was the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. A fertile ground for foreign investors was created. Unlike Nigeria and Gabon, where oil revenue boom killed their agricultural sectors, President Ahidjo emphasized on agricultural development. Investment in the agricultural sector continued to increase: from 23.7 percent in the Fifth Five Year-Development Plan (1981-1986) to 26.1 percent the Sixth Five Year Development Plan (1986-1991). Foreign reserves were well over 300 billion francs SFA in November 1982 (Kofele-Kale, 1983:2872).

In 1986, oil prices steeply declined, i.e., from $29 in 1984 to only $10 in 1986. This meant a decline in Cameroon’s foreign oil earnings from $694 million in 1984-85 to $243 million in 1986-87. The value of the franc devalued by 40 percent, from 500 francs per US$1 in 1985 to 300 francs CFA per U.S. $1 dollar in 1987 (Nantang Jua, 1983:155).

Other export items equally suffered. Compounding Cameroon’s economic problems was capital flight both by rich government officials and foreign corporations who repatriated all their profit earnings. The level of spending by the privileged groups was alarming and disgusting. Many foreign banks were operating in Cameroon during the 1980s following the economic boom – Chase Manhattan, Boston and City Bank. By 1989 domestic financial institutions such as the Cameroon Bank, Banque Camerounaise de Development, Société Camerounaise de Banque, and Paribas – Cameroun, begun to fall.

The Government tried to save the economy from plunging into a crisis but failed. Presumably to bail out the economy from crisis the government agreed to adopt the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and that agreement was concluded in 1988. The so-called Social Dimension Programme of the World Bank was put in place in 1990 and other austerity measures which included salary cuts, retrenchment, reducing amenities to the lowest minimum were taken. Obviously, some of these programmes became very unpopular.
9. Global Politics And Domestic Demands For Reform

President Biya when he came to power had promised to establish a “democratic” society within the parameters of a single party system. Like most African leaders he now turned against any change that could undermine his authority and control of power. Unfortunately, the attempts of his opposition to establish a multi-party system failed. Cameroonian, including Yando Mandegue Black, a lawyer and former president of the Cameroonian Bar Association (C.B.A.), had been meeting clandestinely to explore possible ways of creating a nonpartisan group for the creation of a multiparty system. It gave the rise to the creation of a group called the National Coordination for Democracy and Multiparty System (N.C.D.M.). Unfortunately, the members were arrested prematurely in February 1990 by the security police (CENER) and were charged for holding clandestine meetings, and inciting a rebellion.

After almost three decades of single party authoritarian rule in African, the end of the Cold War and the halting move to a more democratic government in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe served as a catalyst to Cameroonians and peoples of other African countries to demand a change. France (Cameroon’s major trading partner), and other Western capitalist countries and their multinational corporations put pressure on the government to be more liberal and democratic. Prospects for a democratic change in Africa was loudly echoed by Douglas Hurd, the former British Foreign and Commonwealths Secretary in the House of Commons on June 9, 1990. Hurd in his speech emphasized the adoption of formal liberal democratic principles: accountability, respect for rule of law and human rights. In a similar vein, at the Franco-African summit at La Baule in 1990, President Mitterand reinterated his call for political reforms and respect for human rights.


After more than two decades marked by a type of governance, which Ngayap calls “classe dirigeante”, and which Bayart characterizes as “recherche hégémonique”, events in 1990 and their consequences revealed quite different forces at work working for the same goal. Two Cameroons were juxtaposed with patterns of continuity before 1990 facing the pressure for a change. President Biya helped introduce all the text that followed. There were details about the state and civil society which could help to categorize Cameroon as a pivotal case study in Africa’s democratization struggle.

A Yaounde C.P.D.M. militant argued that after twenty-five years of dictatorship, under late Ahidjo, President Paul Biya ushered in the “New Deal Philosophy” which was democratic in approach in governing. His creation of the C.P.C.M. party, New Deal and Communal Liberalism tended to educate Cameroonians on what democracy was all about and thus created a strong sense of militancy which informed the mass of the population that they could no longer tolerate another decade of dictatorship. In 1991, there was mob action and direct confrontation known as “ville mort” (ghost towns) against the regime whose various policies and measures were deemed to interrupt the process of democracy. This led to restoration of the Prime Minister as head of government intended to invigorate the National Assembly. More significantly in response to the March 10, 1991, statement by the administration to the effect that it had never forbidden the formation of any other party in Cameroon, Mr. John Fru Ndi in Bermude North-West Province, and his supporters, seized the opportunity to file a petition with the local authorities to officially recognize his party, the Social Democratic Front (S.D.F.) claiming his right under Article 5 of Law N°67/LF/19 of June 12, 1967.
The Minister of Territorial Administration instead of granting the request tried to dissuade Fru Ndi from launching his party. Mr. Fru Ndi was not dissuaded and on May 26, 1991, he went ahead to launch his party despite the fact that 2000 troops were dispatched to Bamende as a show of deterrence. A crowd of about 35,000 gathered at Ntarikon Park near his compound and marched to the center of Bermude in defiance of government instructions. The troops fired tear gas on the crowd which made attempts to enter the commercial avenue. When the crowd failed to disperse and instead threw stones at them, the soldiers then fired their guns and killed six young adults both male and female. A pro-S.D.F. movement in the University of Yaounde staged a protest demonstration which resulted in a massive arrest. Three of those arrested were tortured to death while soldiers raped female students. Similar demonstrations by the Yaounde University students became a common occurrence throughout 1991 academic year. Presently there are 159 legalized political parties. What is important is not the multipartyism, but the lack of multiple independent structures and institutions that can influence the effectiveness of democracy to flourish in Cameroon.

The private press, especially in the anglophone region, was under siege and censorship – L’Effort Camerounaise of the Catholic Church, Cameroon Post, Le Combatent and Le Messager. Cameroonians started grouping themselves and formed associations with the intention of becoming political parties. Effective collaboration appeared in April 1991 in the National Coordination of Opposition Parties and Associations (NCOPA). It linked the new parties with human and civil rights groups formed during the trial of Yondo Black. Its key demand was a Sovereign National Conference as the recent experiences in Mali and Benin has shown. Cameroon saw a lot of “ville mort” (ghost towns). In some of the provinces, the state institutions of coercion were shut down because of the numerous insurrections.

As I see it, democracy should assume political, economic and social equality. The history of Cameroon’s struggle for democracy has not been successful so far because of the lack of solid social and economic foundations. The question that needs to be answered is what factors can guarantee Africa’s sustainable democracy.

11. **Civil Society In Africa**

The term “Civil Society” is difficult to define. Equally difficult is to define the social positions of individuals and institutions who belongs to “civil society”. The new public administration is characterized by increasingly complicated relationships between the public, private and civil sectors in terms of service delivery, advocacy and decision-making. In this paper, civil society refers to that sector of society in which various group initiative are mobilized to participate in economic, social, political and cultural activities.

The term “civil” is used here as a synonymous with “civic”. It is from the Latin word for “Citizen”; “society” is derived from the Latin word for “companion” and is defined as the “social mode of life, the customs and organization of an ordered community”. “Civil society” can mean the society as a whole and includes even civil servants because they are “citizens within the social mode of life”. It can also mean voluntary organizations and institutions of the citizenry apart from the state and the private sector.

In Cameroon since the law on the formation of associations was enacted in 1990, there has been a proliferation of associations. Civil society can be categorized as follows:

- Independent personality ;
The rise in the number of social organizations in the past decade had been very clear. Fowler cited growth figures ranging from 69% to 260% over the past ten years in African countries (Fowler, 1991: 54). It is widely assumed that these organizations play very important role in the democratization process and will continue to do so. Fowler thinks it is the change of heart by the partners-in-development as a result of civil servants/government not being able to account for foreign aid.

Mkandawire attributes the upsurge of such movements as a call for greater democratization of their society, greater accountability in the management of national affairs, and an end to corruption and waste. In his own words “The most direct expression of foreign pressure on African States has been in the realm of economic Policy. While in the early years of the impositions of Structural Adjustment Programme, it was taken for granted that these programmes would be unpopular and would therefore require regimes that were insulated from popular pressures or had the political will, there has been a sudden shift towards a position that links S.A.P. to democratization. It is important to emphasize that the external view on the necessity or appropriateness of democratic rule is very recent.” (Mkandawire, 1992:8)

In Cameroon, as well as in most African countries, civil society consists of not only what is not of the state, but all of whose may become powerless or disenfranchised i.e. fighting for survival. Authoritarianism and coercion contributed to Africa’s current development problems. The power base becomes restricted to a few just like in the colonial regimes. Decision making is dominated by interests of the minority and not for the public good. This leads to the existence of a massive gap between the policy maker and the people. Related to it is the lack of accountability of the state or the party leadership.

Community participation is missing in this case. To get objective social and economic justice and encourage self-reliance, the people, if democracy is to be meaningful, have to benefit from a policy or a development project should be encouraged to decide the content and direction of such development. Post-colonial governments have generally tried to establish supremacy over civil societies. The state machinery became highly centralized and often personalized. In Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, and Uganda the headmen chair traditional communal meetings. Civil servants and politicians take into account what is decided by these traditional meetings. This is where a bottom-up approach to development has been a success story. The positive aspect of the state and society relationship, which encourages community participation, accounts for Botswana’s relative stable life.

The practice of authentic community participation is generally lacking in most African states. Civil societies are subordinate to the state. The state controls and dominates the civil institutions including the press and labor organizations. Even communal activities are controlled by laws restricting gathering for fear of political rivalry. African leaders are prone to react excessively to criticism and are unwilling or unable to adopt to new ideas, especially when the change has the support of the opposition. The Catholic church has become suspect when it openly criticizes the government as being responsible for the untold sufferings of the masses. Unfortunately, most African opposition leaders are not often the angels they are
painted to be. They ferment unrest and talk about political chaos and instability to gain the sympathy of the electorate.

12. **Public Sector Partnership With The Private Sector And Civil Society**

Civil society organizations serve as monitors of state and private sector activity in such diverse areas as social and economic policies, environmental concerns and human rights. For partnership to be effective, the government should adhere to a code of good conduct vis-à-vis the funding community sectors and voluntary organizations, accountability for public funds, acquiring access to information and communication at all levels and evaluate the degree of progress made by those organizations to ensure effectiveness.

In addition, the government should remove all legal and bureaucratic constraints on setting up civil society institutions. Involve NGOs in policy process, agenda setting, and service delivery as well as the recognition of civil society as partners in development. Consultation with interest groups such as trade unions when major decisions are being made to avoid or minimize “wildcat” strikes. According to the World Bank Report of 1997, “The state in a changing World”, the government should be seen as a facilitator or regulator rather than a provider of goods and services.

The civil society in Cameroon is still gaining awareness and of late, gender issues tend to constitute the basis for the formation of associations. However, to date there has not been any legal instrument that authorizes Non-Governmental Organizations to operate in Cameroon. Consequently, there is no room even for dialogue or negotiations. The National Program for Governance that was concluded with the United Nations Development Program (U.N.D.P.), identified the “civil society” as an integral component of governance in Cameroon, when we talk of partnership in service delivery, advocacy and development.

13. **Governance**

The United Nations Development Program (U.N.D.P.) defines governance as the process of political and administrative management of nation’s affairs. It encompasses the organizations, structures and activities of the central, regional and local governments, the parliament and the judiciary. The concept of governance incorporates also the institutions, organizations and individuals that comprise the civil society, as they actively participate and influence public policy that affect peoples’ lives.

The major factors affecting governance are:

- Organizations such as governments, parliaments and the judiciary;
- Institutions, formal and informal rules, values and procedures used to manage human and economic resources;
- Interaction between institutions and organizations, and the capacity of government to formulate and implement policies.

The exercise of political authority is central to governance. It is therefore important to recognize that the rationale for government decision-making is more often political and economic than anything else. Governments directly or indirectly use their authority to establish and maintain their grips on the formal and informal framework of institutions to regulate social and economic interaction. If a government is democratic, it integrates
participation into the political and economic life of a country. Consequently, effective participation requires empowerment and capacity building of the people who have to share in the management of public affairs.

14. Why The Rush For Governance In Africa

Since the mid-1970s most African countries, especially those in the sub-Saharan region, have plunged into deep economic crisis, and ever since then there have been struggles by Africans to stay afloat and, in this, Cameroon is no exception. Cameroon has accumulated huge foreign debts and deficits. State revenue has been declining from time to time.

In light of these fiscal imperatives, the government has not been able to deliver goods and quality services to the population. Programs have been modified and even abandoned.

The government signed a protocol of agreement with the United Nations Development Program (U.N.D.P.) in July 1997 for a “governance” program. The purpose of the program is to make the government machinery more efficient, effective and accountable for its actions. Five priority areas were identified:

- Public administration;
- Decentralization;
- Judiciary;
- Socio-Economic management; and
- Civil society.

The program is still at the stage where some conceptual apparatuses and evaluative mechanisms being modified. Various commissions have been constituted and studies are underway to analyze the problems and find solutions.

Cameroon has both economic and trained manpower that any country will pray to have. Unfortunately, we are now one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world (Transparent International September 1998). What is the problem? No accountability and good governance.

For sustainable democracy, democratic principles must be respected. The majority decides, the minority is respected. A public political system of checks and balances including an independent judiciary that everybody has access to must be operational. As the Norwegian minister for Development Cooperation once accurately put it to the Advisory Committee of the Global Coalition for Africa.

“We must not forget that democracy must grow from local roots, it cannot be imported, sold or paid for. It cannot be imposed from outside. The people of each nation must take their fate into their own hands and shape the form of government most suited for their national aspirations.”

Therefore the fate of African democracy rests in the hands of those who have been elected into public offices and are representatives of the population in parliament. African democracy must also include our cultural heritage and love for one another.
REFERENCES

African Confidential, October 5, 1983, p.7

Africa Research Bulletin; Political Series 24,2, February 1-2 1987, p. 8400

Albert Mukong, My Stewardship in Cameroon Struggle, Enugu Nigeria, Unika Publishing, 1992, p. 128

Cameroon Life, November/December 1991

Etonga, “An Imperial Presidency”, p. 150


Jean-Francois Bayart The Birth of Ahidjo Regime in Richard Josesph, ed. Gaullist Africa Cameroon under Ahidjo. Fourth Dimension 1978, p. 49

Jean-Francois Bayart, “The Neutralization of Anglophone Cameroon”, in Joseph Page, n.d., p.87

Joseph ed. Gaullist Africa Cameroon under Ahidjo Fourth Dimension 1978

Legum, Africa Contemporary Record 1978-79, p. b509


Le Messager July 13, 1992

Legum, Africa Contemporary Record 1978-79, p. b509


Mark Delancy, Cameroon: Dependency and Independence Cameroon under Ahidjo, Fourth Dimension 1978, p. 49


Mukong, My Stewardship, p. 135


Paul Biya Communal Liberalism, London: Mcmillan 1987 p. 36-37
P. Chabal ed. 1986 in *Political Domination in Africa*


Richard Joseph, *Cameroon under Ahamadou Ahidjo the Neo-colonial Polity*


West Africa June 25-July 1, 1990 p. 1077

West Africa September 3-9, 1990 p. 2398

West Africa December 12-18, 1993 p. 2872

West Africa June 27-July 3, 1988 p. 1158