Cameroon

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Introduction

In two important respects the recent history of Cameroon has been different from many of the rest of the countries of Africa. Cameroon’s economy has been characterized by long term growth and some development, aided by the discovery of petroleum and capable economic planning. Even during the ongoing drought, Cameroon has been largely food self-sufficient. Moreover, with the exception of one serious attempted coup d'état, the political situation has been marked by stability, though the political system cannot be described as democratic. There is, however, movement toward and some promise of democracy under the current leadership of the country’s second president, Paul Biya.

However, in many respects, Cameroon is typical of other African states. Although its 1980 population of 8.1 million puts it in the upper third of African countries, Cameroon is located closer to the median with respect to most measures. A survey of 47 African states in 1980 reported 19 countries with per capita incomes higher, and 27 lower, than Cameroon’s $328. Twenty-six countries had a higher average population density and 20 a lower density than Cameroon’s 16.2 persons per square kilometre.

These averages may be misleading, for there are substantial variations in density and income between the provinces of Cameroon. Too, there are great variations within provinces, both between rural and urban and between different rural areas. The highest density zones are located in areas of derived savanna, light forest, and urban centres. The lowest densities are found in forested regions.

There are also very great variations in income. One study reports that 10 percent of the population receive 60 percent of the national income – or 90 percent of the population receive only 40 percent of the income. Lowest incomes are in the North, East, and North-West; highest incomes are in the most urbanized
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provinces. See USAID *Country development strategy statement FY 82*, (Washington IDCA, 1980) and ‘The political economy of regional development in Cameroon’ in *An African experiment in nation-building* (q.v.). Urban dwellers receive a large amount of the national income, and rural dwellers receive only a very small proportion.

Twenty-eight percent of the population live in urban areas, although 80 percent of the economically active population are involved in agricultural activities. The significant differences between urban and rural life are indicated by measures of electricity use – 23 percent of urban and 1/2 percent of rural dwellers; pipe-borne water, 58 percent of urban and 8 percent of rural dwellers; and, corrugated metal roofs, 83 percent of urban and 36 percent of rural inhabitants. The concentration of amenities in the urban areas is continuing to increase. See *Main results of the April 1976 general population and housing census* (q.v.).

The population of Cameroon consists of numerous ethnic groups; some estimates suggest that there are as many as 200 identifiable ethnic entities. Unlike the Nigerian situation, no one of these groups represents a politically significant proportion of the population. However, two other aspects of diversity within the population are of political importance – the division between English-speaking and French-speaking Cameroonians which results from the colonial history of the state and the potentially more significant division between North and South which is the result of pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence factors. The anglophone-francophone conflict serves largely to weaken the Southern side in the Northern-Southern division, for the large majority of the anglophone population lives in the South. Such conflicts are real, however, only when exploited by élites or potential élites. In a sense, these are resources that might be mobilized by political leaders.

As in most West African countries, Cameroon stretches from the humid Atlantic coast with its very high rainfall to the interior of the continent with its dry desert climate. Altitude variations combine with these climate variations to yield five main regions of agricultural production, each characterized by certain major crops. The plateaus and savannas of the North produce millet, groundnuts, rice and cotton. Maize, cassava, yam, sweet potato and market garden crops are of some importance. Cattle, sheep, goats and horses are raised in large numbers. Fishing on Lake Chad, the Logone River and the Benue River provides some
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protein. There is no forest production. The western plateau produces maize, tubers, plantains, groundnuts and market garden items. It is also an important region for the production of Arabica and Robusta coffee. Cattle are raised and there has been an interesting and successful development of pisciculture in recent years. There is little forest production. Tea, rice and chinchona are in various stages of development.

The central savanna region produces large amounts of food crops (maize, yams, cassava, plantains and sweet potatoes) and cash crops (cocoa, coffee, tobacco and sugar). Small but important productions of gourd seeds and sesame seeds also occur here. Rice is being developed and cotton experiments are being conducted. Cattle are raised in the North Eastern part of the region and there are good timber stands, particularly at Deng-Deng.

The rain forest region of the South produces large amounts of food – plantain, cassava, cocoyam, groundnuts – and it is the major producer of cocoa. Oil palm products are grown and there is a suitable environment for the extension of Robusta coffee plantings. Cattle cannot be raised here, but small livestock production takes place and may be expanded. Fishing and hunting provide limited amounts of protein. The nation’s forestry industry is centered in this area.

Food production in the coastal region is similar to that of the southern forest area, but large-scale development of agroindustrial plantations is a major feature. Oil palm, rubber, bananas, tea and pepper are currently produced on these estates, and experiments with coconut, pineapple and avocado are being conducted. Some coffee is grown on the sides of Mt. Cameroon. Sea and river fishing are important and the significant timber industry continues, although resources are now becoming depleted. There is a small amount of animal husbandry.

Cameroon has a rather low proportion of its land under cultivation. Overall, it is estimated that 3.2% of the total surface area of the country is presently being cultivated. One study indicated that 6% of the country was being utilized for agriculture, 17% for grazing, 18% was fallow and 50% was forest. The remaining 9% were water surface and waste lands. See Mary T. Chambliss’ ‘Cameroon’s agricultural economy in brief’. In any case, it appears that the Republic of Cameroon might greatly increase production by extending the areas presently under cultivation.

Aside from other problems, some people argue that a major
difficulty in fulfilling such a proposal is Cameroon’s small population. However Cameroon’s population policy aims at an increase from the present figure of 9 million to about 18 million persons. One is impressed by the conviction widely held among members of the Cameroon élite that such population growth is necessary ‘to provide the labor needed for our economic growth’. Government perceptions of the country’s population size and rate of growth are that it is low. In the past Cameroon continued French colonial policies outlawing contraception and added new legislation in this respect. There are more recent indications that official attitudes in this respect are changing.

With its wide variety of agricultural environments, its large amount of land still not under cultivation, and the relatively low level of technology of most of its farm population, Cameroon would appear to have an important potential as an agricultural producer. This potential could be utilized to serve the needs of Cameroon’s neighbours, most of which are already food-deficit states with rapidly increasing needs for food products. At this time, Cameroon produces sufficient food for its needs, and some food is exported (often illegally) to neighbouring states. With appropriate development planning and action, Cameroon could greatly increase food production, increase rural incomes and provide an important financial contribution to self-development.

A major impediment to the development of the country is the present condition of the transportation network. The extension of the Trans-Cameroon railway to Ngaoundere opened up large areas which were previously ill-served and the minor extension to Kumba connected an important food-producing area to the urban site of Douala. The road system, although expanded in recent years, is still inadequate in most regions. Particularly in the coastal areas, where rainfall ranges from 200 to 400 cm or more per year, the maintenance of unpaved roads is very difficult, and many roads remain out of service for long periods. In the cities roads are generally paved and well-maintained, but in rural areas there are many regions not even served by the most rudimentary of farm-to-market roads. In many cases local villages have attempted to increase food production for sale to urban or foreign markets, but have found it impossible to market the produce due to transportation difficulties. Road connections to Nigeria and Gabon are extremely weak.

In addition to agriculture and forest production, Cameroon has iron, bauxite and petroleum resources. Only petroleum is now being exploited, mostly for export. Current domestic needs are
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processed at a local refinery which opened in 1980. Liquid natural gas may be exported. Cameroon will thus have an important income earning ability through the export of crude and refined products for some years to come. At present the refinery and most known exploitable reserves are located in the anglophone portion of the country.

There is a moderate range of industrial production in the country, the most important element of which is aluminium (based on imported bauxite). Other products include fertilizer, pulp and paper, plywood, plastics, beer, cigarettes, chocolate and a variety of other items. It is estimated that 20 percent of GDP is derived from industry, 33 percent from agriculture and 47 percent from services.

The country is dependent upon imports for machinery and other manufactured goods. Major exports include petroleum, cocoa, coffee, timber and aluminium; coffee and cocoa represent 65 percent of the value of exports. The EEC receives 60 percent of Cameroon's exports and is the source of 68 percent of imports. France, the ex-colonial power for most of the country, receives 22 percent of exports and provides 45 percent of the imports. The trade balance has registered small deficits in some years but growing petroleum production has led to regular, if small, surpluses.

Cameroon has an agricultural potential and is situated near food-deficit states, there is no excess population problem although there is an absence of technology and skills, and there are some valuable mineral resources, including petroleum. There are numerous obstacles, but Cameroon can be a viable economic entity with the possibility of economic growth and development.

German Cameroon

Cameroon has experienced diverse external influences in its recent history. In the 15th century Portuguese explorers sailed along the coast and opened trade relations. Other traders – Spanish, French, British, American and German – became active first in the slave trade and later in the legitimate commerce in ivory, rubber and other primary products. Major influences were also exerted by African incursions, such as the movement of the Fulani into the north in the 18th century and their conquest of that region in the early 19th century, see Fulani hegemony in Yola (q.v.). It was, however, the Germans who in 1884
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established themselves as the colonial power in Cameroon. During the next thirty years, the German protectorate greatly extended in size, far beyond the present-day borders of independent Cameroon.

The German period of rule was significant in many ways. For example, much of the basic infrastructure of the country was established during this time. Moreover, the process of drawing the territory into the international capitalist economic system and the establishment of economic dependence upon Western Europe was furthered. Also, it was during this time that an attitude of administrative dominance and paternalism over the rural populations was established, an attitude that has continued through German, British and French periods of rule, and is still in evidence in independent Cameroon. This is probably less true of the British than the French, German or Cameroonian administrations. Through their wanton neglect of the territory, the British gave the rural dwellers more chance for initiative.

In the German period the two major economic activities of the protectorate were trade and plantation agriculture. European proponents of each system of exploiting local resources conflicted constantly over scarce labour and in their attempts to pass legislation favourable to their view. Trade, mainly in rubber, ivory and palm products, was conducted between European agents and Cameroonians who gathered the produce from wild sources. Very little cultivation was involved, although there were some limited attempts to train Africans in proper rubber tapping methods and agricultural techniques. Large numbers of labourers were involved in gathering this produce and in head-carrying it to shipping points. This caused substantial dislocation in the hinterland and greatly disrupted agricultural processes in the affected areas.

In South Western Cameroon the extensive development of plantations was the cause of large-scale and widespread migration. The plantations were the cause of great suffering, misery, and death during the German rule of Cameroon. Plantations need extensive areas of land and large, inexpensive supplies of labour. The first requirement leads to development in areas of low population density, with the local population usually displaced (in Cameroon to reservations). The second requirement involves migration from areas of high density. This migration, which to a large extent was forced, was the cause of much human hardship. German explorers found potential workers in inland areas which differed in vegetation, climate and disease vectors from the
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coastal regions where the plantations were located. One might characterize the supply areas as healthy, but the plantation areas were definitely unhealthy.

During the First World War the allied powers invaded the territory, drove the Germans out, and divided the land between them. In 1922 the two areas became League of Nations mandates and in 1946 United Nations trust territories. French Cameroon became an independent state in 1960, and the southern portion of British Cameroons joined it on October 1, 1961 to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The northern portion of British Cameroons became a part of Nigeria. On June 2, 1972 the federation was ended and a unitary state, the United Republic of Cameroon was formed. President Biya altered the name to the Republic of Cameroon (RC) in 1984.

Anglophone Cameroon

After the removal of the Germans, the British took control of the South Western and North Western portions of Cameroon. That portion which later became part of the RC was generally neglected by the British. It was a small territory with little or no apparent value in British eyes, and because of its mandate/trusteeship status its position in the British Empire was never considered secure or permanent. There was neither desire nor interest on the part of the British, and, as a result, little effort or funds were invested in the territory. For most of the period, Southern Cameroons, as the area was entitled, was treated as a colony of Nigeria, which was a colony of Britain. The movement into Cameroons of Nigerians, especially Ibos, Ibibios and Efiks, became very pronounced and this was to be a major factor in the decision of the inhabitants of Southern Cameroons to join Cameroon rather than Nigeria in 1961. The fear of Nigerian, especially Ibo, domination and exploitation was very great. The Ibos became a predominant element in the civil service and police, in transport and marketing, and were a strong competitor for land in the coastal districts.

The major agricultural and rural development of this period occurred because most of the old German plantations were in the British sector. By 1924, most of these had been sold to the original German owners, a situation which remained until the Second World War. At the beginning of the war these properties were confiscated by the government and in 1946 they were
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unified and placed under the control of a government entity, the Cameroon Development Corporation. There has been a continual change in the origin of the labour supply for the plantations, in part related to political considerations. In the era of German rule, workers came from all parts of Cameroon, but especially from the Bamenda and Yaoundé areas. After the division of the area into British and French mandates, the number of labourers from the French area declined rapidly, but there was an increase from British-controlled areas, including Nigeria. The granting of independence and the reunification of Cameroon, resulted in the Nigerian source ending almost completely; in fact, in 1962 most Nigerian workers were declared redundant.

It is difficult to make a full assessment and evaluation of the role of the Cameroon Development Corporation in the economy of the Republic of Cameroon, for no authoritative study of this question has yet been published. However, there are some indications that the corporation's contribution has been positive. The construction of numerous roads, the building and staffing of schools, the paying of numerous scholarships for training in engineering, business, and medical skills, and the provision of medical care for a large proportion of the inhabitants of the South Western Province are examples of the indirect contributions the plantations have made for many years. In a more direct manner, the corporation's exports represent a contribution to the economy.

In spite of these possible benefits from the plantation experience, the results for rural development may be viewed as negative. Large-scale migration for long periods of time from the rural areas weakens rural structures and has a negative effect upon agriculture. Employment as a labourer on a plantation is not conducive to the overall development of a self-sufficient class of small farmers, either as individuals or in cooperative efforts. The existence of the plantations, especially in the post-Second World War era, meant that a large proportion of whatever funds were available for this largely neglected territory went to the plantations, and not to agricultural extension, food crop research or infrastructural development outside the plantation area. Indeed, it was only in the mid-1950s that a motor road was extended beyond the town of Bamenda into the heart of the North West Province; that road remains to this day unpaved and for much of its length it is a mere track.

This is not to say that the British colonial administration did absolutely nothing for rural area development. However, most of
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what was done outside the plantations in this respect was aimed at the encouragement of the growth of export crops, especially cocoa and coffee, and even here, most of what was accomplished was due to African rather than European initiative.

Plantations and cooperatives were two major involvements of the British colonial régime in the rural development of Cameroon. Both of these efforts were aimed at the production of export crops to supply the needs of the industrial states of Western Europe, especially Germany in the interwar period and Britain in the post-Second World War years. Little or no attention was paid to improvements in agricultural technology for local needs, to infrastructural development, or to the formation of integrated, developmental economic structures either within Southern Cameroons or between Southern Cameroons and Nigeria.

Francophone Cameroon

In French Cameroon colonial officials and French settlers had a somewhat different view of the purposes and future of the territory they controlled, but in important respects the results were not greatly different. Although the mandate/trust status was the cause of uneasiness about the long-range disposition of the territory and some large-scale projects were never undertaken on this account, there was, in general, a more positive view of the territory than that held by the British. This resulted in greater private and public investment by France and in a much greater involvement by French citizens in the territory than was to occur in the British areas.

French efforts were high concentrated in a region served by the largely German-built railroad, a ‘fertile crescent’ extending from Foumban to Douala to Kribi and to Yaoundé. Here were the major urban-industrial centres and the most important agricultural regions, producing coffee, cocoa, tea, palm products and timber. It was in this region that the majority of French citizens settled, often in competition with Cameroon farmers in the production of cash crops.

French efforts concentrated on the expansion of cash crop production, especially cocoa for African planters and coffee and bananas for Europeans. Africans entered coffee production only after the Second World War. A second emphasis through most of the period of French rule was on the development of a small, landed class of wealthy chiefs who, it was thought, would become
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a strong conservative element in favour of the retention of close ties with the French. Such 'chiefs', who often had no claim to such a title under African law or custom, were created by the French as the major local element in a system of colonial rule.

In similar fashion, the French attempted to promote cocoa growing, the major agricultural innovation for the bulk of the population, in a manner that would encourage the growth of a plantation class of farmers who would be supportive of French colonial rule.

Again, as in the British territory, we see that the major effort of the French in Cameroon development was aimed at the production of export crops and, to some extent, this was to the benefit of expatriate farmers. Little was done to foster the development of food crop production beyond the provision of extension-type services to a limited number of government appointed chiefs. In addition, little concern was shown or action taken on behalf of some sort of integrated Cameroon economic system. The needs of France were predominant in the decision making process that controlled development in French Cameroon.

Another aspect of French rule should be noted, namely, a tendency to plan large-scale, multipurpose projects for rural development which were originated with little or no participation of the rural population in the planning and with little understanding of the dynamics of Cameroon rural life, or even the great variety that occurs between rural areas of Cameroon.

Rural development and the Republic of Cameroon

In recent years the RC has begun to view agricultural development as the keystone of overall economic development for the country. Food crops, industrial crops, animal and fish husbandry and forest production are all to be modernized, restructured and revolutionized in an effort to increase production, productivity and the attractiveness of rural living. Cameroon is planning to have a 'Green Revolution'.

President Ahidjo, on the occasion of the Agricultural Show in Buea in 1973, declared that the country was to embark on a Green Revolution, 'to deploy all means capable of promoting the development of the potential of Cameroon's rural production by eliminating anachronistic forms of constraint for the small holder and by creating conditions for a modern agricultural economy.' This transformation requires the introduction of new technology
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and skills, the alteration of rural structures and the marketing system and the improvement of rural living conditions. In so doing, production and productivity will increase, dependence on a small number of income-producing crops will cease, export earnings will increase and food imports will decrease, nutrition levels will rise, and the rural exodus of youth to the urban centres will be slowed. 'The obligatory modernization of the traditional sector consequently makes it necessary for there to be major changes at the human, technical and economic levels. . . . This policy involves projects connected with production, marketing and the standard of living in the rural areas.'

Like many colonially-imposed rural development plans, there appears to be an assumption that the rural dweller has only his or her labour to contribute to rural development. Rural interests, variances from one rural area to another and rural initiatives and leadership are not a part of the planning for rural development. Thus, we find the continuation of a pattern that arose in 1880s with German colonial policies and the development of a plantation system, that continues through the French colonial period, and now emerges as predominant in the independence era.

A second pattern originating in the colonial era is largely continued in the Green Revolution. Although there is some consideration in the plans for increased food production, particularly in an effort to provide food for the wage-employed class in the urban areas at a low price, emphasis has been devoted to cash crops for export, mainly to Europe. In respect of food, the main consideration is to provide sufficient food, at low prices, for the urban dweller. There is only slight attention paid to the potential role of Cameroon as a supplier of food, such as yams, rice and plantains to its food-deficit neighbours. Also, the emphasis on low food prices for urban dwellers runs contrary to both the food export potential and to the real needs of the rural inhabitant. Food exports are discouraged in order to prevent food shortages in Cameroon urban areas. Food shortages would lead to price rises and price rises would cause urban discontent and problems for the government. Major emphasis in agricultural development continues to be exerted in those crops that supply the European market, rather than food crops for the African market.

As a result, at least in part, of these policies, incomes remain low for the vast majority of rural inhabitants. Rural farmers, however, are not organized, and in most instances probably do
not realize what might be gained through organization. Their ability to exert pressure upon government is limited, and any local disturbances are strongly repressed by the police and the military. Rural incomes remain low, and the only means of expressing rural discontent is through migration to urban centres.

Cameroon has a good potential for agricultural growth and development. Available arable land, a lack of population pressure and several food deficit neighbours all suggest an important and profitable role as food supplier to West and Central Africa. The adaptation to such a role requires appropriate planning, decision-making procedures, and follow through on the part of individual farmers, local authorities and the central government. Yet, the history of rural and agricultural development in the past one hundred years has established patterns and practices that inhibit progress towards such an adaptation.

The political process

It is necessary to consider the mode of operation of the Cameroon government and the process whereby the present political system has evolved in order to understand the dimensions of the lack of communication between the rural peasantry and the central government and the almost total lack of participation of those rural masses in that government.

The Ahidjo régime was established in the late 1950s as a direct result of the policies of the French colonial administration. The conservative regime of Ahmadou Ahidjo was installed in power as the independent government of the country in an effort to prevent the more nationalist, left-wing party, the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), from taking power. The electoral process was used by the French administration to put Ahidjo and the Union Camerounaise into office, while the courts, the police and the army were used to destroy the real nationalist party and its leadership. This conflict continued for a long period of time, and the country became independent while a state of war existed.

The effects of this traumatic coming to power (as well as the lessons of events elsewhere in African politics) created a régime which was strongly fearful of opposition. Established in an environment of war and fear, the government remained extremely suspicious of opposition or criticism. The results were a highly centralized administration in a unitary state, a single party
dominated by a few political personalities, and a stern, semi-
police state where human rights were often deferred in preference
to the survival of the régime.

Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, has in recent years become
the sole source of administrative decision-making in the country.
Local and municipal governments, primary and secondary
schools, and loans for agricultural development are only a few of
the many tasks that are Yaoundé based. The primary school
teacher in Garoua travels to Yaoundé to ask about a promotion
and the Chairman of the Young Farmers Club in Mokunda
travels to Yaoundé to secure an agricultural loan. The process of
the transfer of decision making to the centre, well-advanced in
the francophone areas at the time of independence, was
continued by the Ahidjo administration. There are no longer any
local centres of decision-making. Much like the system that
prevails in France, but extended to more intimate detail, local
authorities are appointed from Yaoundé, and these officials look
to Yaoundé for guidance, promotion, and transfer. This centraliza-
tion was largely unknown in the anglophone section of the
country at the time of reunification, but with the disappearance
of the government of the State of West Cameroon when the
federation ended in 1972 the full brunt of the centralization
process has been brought to bear on the English-speaking parts
of the country. The ending of the federation was a major step in
breaking up not only an administrative but also a political
competitor of Yaoundé, for the old anglophone state with its
focus, both administrative and political, on its capital of Buea
was now divided into two provinces, each tied directly to
Yaoundé. In this case of divide and rule it is no surprise that each
of these provinces represents a long-standing competitive group
within the anglophone area.

Parallel to the ending of the federation has been the move to
end political party pluralism, first in the francophone region and
then in the entire country. Numerous tactics were used in this
process, including cooptation of the leaders of patron-client
parties and force. The overall effect was to develop an
organization of patrons at the centre with each tied to his or her
client group. Thus, the Cameroon National Union was not a mass
party, and it did not serve as a means of communication,
participation or mobilization for more than a small group of
persons.

To buttress this bureaucratic régime, the government relied on
a number of laws – and thus on the police – to stifle that
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opposition which could not be coopted or coerced. Jean-François Bayart, in ‘One-party government and political development in Cameroon’ African Affairs no. 72 (April 1973, p. 125–44), argues that the predominant ideology of the Ahidjo government was the ‘ethic of unity’ which aimed at the dissolution of all loyalties except loyalty to the nation. In order to implement this ethic, Cameroon law, according to Bayart provides for the arrest of ‘whosoever shall give utterance to or propagate false reports, news or rumours, or tenditious commentaries on accurate news when such news, rumour or commentary may tend to be damaging of the public authorities. . . .’ Persons were arrested and held for political reasons and newspapers were subjected to administrative censorship prior to final printing. Several books on Cameroon politics were banned.

In its effort to promote the ‘ethic of unity’ the government attempted to destroy possible alternative foci of loyalty. It was not only pluralistic party systems and the Federal Republic that were to be eliminated, but other types of organizations disappeared or became attached to government or party structures. Thus, trade unions, youth and women’s groups lost their independent existence.

So there arose a government that was cut off from the public, a public that could not communicate with its government. Bayart is correct when he writes that ‘The white-collar workers, manual workers, and peasants for their part no longer [had] available specific channels through which to express their demands . . . the farmers can put forward their interests only when administrative tours take place; prefects and subprefects have become their sole representatives,’ see Jean-François Bayart’s ‘Les catégories dirigeantes au Cameroun’ in Revue Française d’Études Politiques Africaines, no. 105 (Sept. 1974). The bureaucracy became the predominant force after the President and his small group of top party officials. It is by satisfying the needs of these groups (and their military counterparts) that the political élite stayed in power. Only minimal attention needed to be paid to the majority of the population.

President Ahidjo, the designer and builder of the political system just described, resigned in 1982, turning most powers over to his designated replacement, Paul Biya. It appears that Biya’s intention has been to assert firm control of the political system and to move it towards a more democratic process. Unfortunately, the requirements of the first goal have made it difficult to progress toward the second goal.
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Such progress might have been more rapid and concrete if ex-President Ahidjo had fully relinquished power and if he had been content to remain in retirement. However, this was not the case. Ahidjo apparently believed that he could safely put Biya in the presidency, but real power would remain with Ahidjo. The former president had trained and groomed Biya and felt that his client would remain obedient. Also, Ahidjo retained the presidency of the only political party and he appointed Biya’s first cabinet. But, Biya proved to be quite independent, the party voted Ahidjo out of office, and Biya dismantled the Ahidjo cabinet. As these events took place, Biya also took steps to restore the freedom of the press, to quell the secret police, and there was talk of reforming the electoral and party systems: the machinery for repression was turned off but not dismantled. This movement towards democracy was crushed in April 1984 when a serious coup d'état was attempted in Ahidjo’s favour. The immediate needs of security led to the reopening of a period of repression, a period that may be shortlived and will end as the real threat of further violence subsides.

Cameroon is a country with true promise for economic growth and development. Political stability has existed for most of its independent history and there is some hope for the development of a more democratic political process. The outlook for the future of this African country remains positive.

The bibliography

This volume in the World Bibliographical Series has been prepared to serve the needs of the general reader. The references included were selected on the basis of their individual significance in the total body of literature on Cameroon, but also with respect to their availability to the public. That body of literature exists mainly in three languages, German, French and English, which are the languages of the colonial occupiers of Cameroon. However, we have stressed the English-language materials in our selection process.

This is not a comprehensive bibliography, for its primary purpose is to serve the reader who needs a quick introduction to the major works on Cameroon. However, sufficient information is provided here for those who need in-depth knowledge of any aspect of Cameroon studies to begin their research. Careful use of the bibliography chapter of this volume and attention to the individual references throughout the volume (which note each item containing a significant bibliography) will guide the scholar to the full extent of Camerouniana.
Introduction

The items referenced here include an annotation, generally a brief description of the work or, in the case of edited volumes, a summary of the table of contents. At the end of each chapter there is a list of cross-references to relevant items in other chapters.

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