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A banner with the text "U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE" in a serif font, set against a background of a stylized American flag.

CAMEROON ASYLUM COUNTRY PROFILE 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	(p1)
II.	Context and Overview	
	A. Overview of Political Structure	(p2)
	B. Governance	(p3)
	C. Human Rights Situation	(p4)
III.	Patterns in Asylum Claims and Relevant Country Conditions	(p4)
	A. Claims Based on Political Opinion	(p4)
	B. Claims Based on Other Political Considerations	(p6)
	C. Challenges to Adjudicating Asylum claims	(p9)
ANNEX I.	Major Political Parties and Presidential Candidates	(p10)
ANNEX II.	Chronology	(p12)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Cameroon country profile is produced by the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs for use by the Executive Office for Immigration Review and the Department of Homeland Security in assessing asylum claims. By regulation the Department of State may provide asylum officers and immigration judges information on country conditions that may be pertinent to the adjudication of asylum claims. The purpose of this and other profiles is to provide factual information relating to such conditions. They do not relate to particular asylum claims, but instead provide general country condition information as of the date they are drafted.

Profiles are circulated for comment within the State Department, including to overseas missions, and to other agencies if appropriate. Adjudicators may also wish to review the relevant chapters of the Department of State's annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* and *International Religious Freedom Report*, available on the Internet at www.state.gov, and other publicly available materials on conditions in Cameroon.

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II. CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

In many respects Cameroon is a microcosm of the entire continent of Africa. Linguistically, Cameroon's 18 million people comprise 24 major African language groups with two official languages, English and French. An estimated 40 percent of Cameroonians practice indigenous beliefs, 40 percent are Christian, and the remaining 20 percent are Muslim. There are also approximately seven major ethnic groups and a small percentage of non-Africans. Tensions within Cameroon derive primarily from economic and social conditions, which have seriously deteriorated in the last few years, and political tensions between the ruling party and opposition parties.

The Republic of Cameroon was created from a merger of the former French Cameroon and a part of British Cameroon in 1961. Ahmadou Ahidjo assumed the presidency of the new Federal Republic of Cameroon. In May 1972 a new Constitution created a unitary republic, the United Republic of Cameroon. In 1982 Ahidjo resigned and named Paul Biya his successor. Biya was reelected in 1984, 1992, 1997, and in October 2004. The 2004 election was flawed by irregularities, particularly in the voter registration process, but observers believed the results represented the will of the voters. Biya's party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has held power despite the move to a multi-party system in 1990 by limiting political choice through maintaining control of administrative and patronage systems, making it difficult for opposition parties to gain support or have their existing support fully reflected in the electoral process. Legislative and municipal elections were held in July 2007. Despite some procedural improvements, they also were marred by irregularities, and the ruling party won a landslide victory. The next presidential election is slated for 2011.

Cameroon has ten provinces, two of which are predominantly English speaking. Approximately one-fourth of Cameroonians are Anglophone and the government's main opposition is from Anglophone Cameroon.

A. Overview of Political Structure

Approximately 200 political parties were formed after the Constitution was amended to allow for a multi-party system. However, growing opposition to the Biya presidency led to repression and set the stage for increased tension and sometimes violent confrontations between the government and the opposition. The CPDM won a majority in legislative elections in 1992, and Biya was reelected president, though the result was tainted by widespread allegations of fraud and was followed by violent protests. The 1997 presidential and legislative elections, which were boycotted by the major opposition parties, returned Biya for a new seven-year term. Municipal and legislative elections held in 2002 resulted in the ruling party winning 133 out of the 180 contested seats. The results of these elections prompted claims from opposition parties of widespread electoral malfeasance and irregularities. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) Freedom House reported that legislative and municipal elections in 2002 lacked transparency.

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The legislative and municipal elections of July 2007 gave a landslide victory to the ruling CPDM, with 153 deputies out of 180.

Despite significant but limited institutional reforms in the 1990s, the CPDM maintains exclusive control of the state apparatus, including the judiciary, the principal avenues of economic accumulation, and a privileged presence at the level of local and regional administration. Efforts to create a united front in opposition to the regime have consistently failed, most often because of the inability of opposition party leaders to sacrifice personal or party ambitions for the sake of collective objectives. The Coalition for National Reconciliation and Reconstruction (CRRN), an opposition alliance formed by the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Cameroon Democratic Union (UDC) to contest the 2004 elections, disintegrated when SDF party chairman John Fru Ndi did not receive the alliance's nomination. Opposition parties were similarly fractured in the 2007 contest, and suffered an overwhelming defeat, winning only 27 of 180 seats. Importantly, there are clear signs of division and opposition within the ruling party.

The SDF was launched as a protest movement in 1990 and in 1992 the SDF leader lost the presidential election to Paul Biya by 35.9 percent to 39.9 percent amidst allegations of widespread fraud. Demonstrations in the North West province were violently suppressed. These circumstances began the polarization between the government and the opposition that permeates Cameroon politics. As noted above, while this polarization continues, the expectation of regime change in 2011 and fractures within the ruling party make the opposition within the CDPM the more important factor.

Voter apathy is high as a result of broad disenchantment with the political process and politicians of both the ruling party and opposition. This is due in part to systematic boycotts by the opposition and electoral fraud which sapped the energy and interest of the electorate in the democratic process. Furthermore, many believe that the ruling party apparatus will influence the elections and that the ineptitude of the opposition parties prevents them from mounting a serious challenge to the CDPM.

Deep-seated distrust between a government bent on remaining in power, and a sense of disenfranchisement on the part of a vocal, disgruntled, and fractious opposition, cloud the political climate.

B. Governance

International human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Freedom House have characterized corruption as "rampant" in Cameroon, contending that President Biya has made little progress on his 2004 campaign pledge to crack down on official graft. According to Transparency International's (TI) 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, corruption among the country's public officials was perceived by both resident and nonresident experts to be "rampant," which was the most severe assessment designation used by TI. According to TI the average household pays \$205, or more than 20 percent of its income, in bribes each year. The 2006 Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices reported that corruption remained a serious problem in all branches of government, both in the

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ruling party and opposition. In 2006, the President created the National Anti-Corruption Commission, placing it under his authority. In 2007, some of the high profile anti corruption cases, which were brought to court in 2006, resulted in prison terms and fines for the defendants, all of which are under appeal as of October 2007.

There is little public faith in the ability of the police to bring suspects to justice. In June 2006 the BBC News reported an increase in vigilante justice prompted by general distrust and frustration on the part of a public that has lost faith in the police and judiciary to combat crime. Alleged criminals were sometimes beaten, lynched, and/or burned to death.

The constitutional amendment in 1996, which lengthened the presidential term of office to seven years, also provided for a more independent legislature and judiciary. However, the judiciary is still subject to significant executive influence and suffers from corruption and inefficiency.

C. Human Rights Situation

The State Department's 2006 Human Rights Report notes that while the government took steps to advance human rights, numerous human rights abuses and intolerance continued, including:

- Unlawful killings, torture, beatings, and other abuses by security forces, particularly of detainees and prisoners;
- Arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of Anglophone citizens advocating secession and local human rights monitors and activists;
- Prolonged and incommunicado pretrial detention;
- Infringement on privacy rights;
- Restriction of freedoms of speech, press, freedom of movement, assembly, and association;
- Societal violence and discrimination against women and indigenous ethnic minorities and homosexuals;
- Trafficking in persons, primarily children.

In the North and Extreme North provinces the government continued to permit traditional chiefs, or Lamibe, to detain persons outside the government penitentiary system, in effect creating private prisons.

In the course of prison visits in 2005, the State Department received credible reports of torture from prisoners' families and lawyers. A 2003 report from the international human rights NGO, FIDH, found that torture and ill treatment were "daily practice" in police stations and gendarmerie after arrests. In a 2000 report, Sir Nigel Rodley, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture, confirmed after a 1999 visit to Cameroon that torture and ill-treatment were "systematic and widespread" in Cameroon's police and gendarmerie cells.

III. PATTERNS IN ASYLUM CLAIMS AND RELEVANT COUNTRY CONDITIONS

A. Claims Based on Political Opinion

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The Social Democratic Front (SDF), the major opposition political party, was launched as a protest movement in 1991, and in 1992 the SDF leader lost the presidential election as reported above. Demonstrations in the North West province were violently suppressed. These circumstances began the polarization between the government and the opposition that permeates Cameroon politics. The SDF is a challenge to the ruling party because it is well established and organized.

Members of the SDF sit in Parliament and have regular meetings in public and with the government. Generally, neither SDF nor SCNC membership itself is a basis for persecution. While admitted SCNC membership is likely to provoke government harassment, only very active and serious members attract the attention of authorities.

The State Department is not aware of any credible report that SDF membership resulted in persecution and has received no reports of harassment of opposition politicians during the 2007 parliamentary elections.

The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) is a group of activists with the political aim of gaining the independence of Southern (Anglophone) Cameroon. The SCNC has not been permitted to register as a legal organization/association and is therefore illegal. Occasionally, and especially in the days preceding and during October 1, 2007 commemorations, security forces arrest and detain some members. SCNC sympathizers are occasionally harassed by police, as the secessionist literature and sentiments they hold are illegal under Cameroonian law. However, the authorities are most interested in the organizers, and arrested 26 of them in Bamenda in March of 2007. The trial is proceeding in accord with Cameroonian law – and is a strong indication of a shift in how Cameroonian authorities wish to deal with this group. Overall, the group has weakened dramatically, and is not considered a threat by the authorities, or a serious political force by Cameroonians who might share some of its views.

Adjudicators might use the following questions to help sort bona fide SCNC members from impostors:

- How many members does SCNC have? (approx 200)
- Where do most of them live? (The United States)
- How many coordinators does the SCNC have and what areas do they cover? (Two: Northwest and Southwest provinces)
- Who is the leader of the Northern Zone Chair (Prince Hitler Mbinglo)
- Who is the Southern Zone Chair (Sylvester Taku)
- Who is the National Chairman of the SCNC (Chief Ayambe Ette Otun)
- Where is the SCNC headquarters in Bamenda located? (Cow Street)
- What is the SCNC motto? ("The force of argument not the argument of force")
- In 2007 a group of SCNC members were arrested. Where were they arrested? What has happened to them? (Arrested in Bamenda and released on bail)

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Two new youth organizations emerged in the early 1990s with radically different attitudes toward the Francophone-dominated state: the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), which supports the main goals of the Anglophone struggle and the creation of an independent Anglophone State, and President Biya's Youths (PRESBY) which is opposed to the Anglophone struggle and has expressed its loyalty to President Biya in exchange for a share in the diminishing pool of State resources. The SCYL is the youth branch of the SCNC. It has been fairly quiet the last several years. Youth protests tend to be focused either on poor conditions/facilities or on the disparate treatment between Anglophones and Francophones, rather than on seeking independence.

Like the SCNC, the SCYL is a secessionist organization, created by younger activists in Buea, in Cameroon's South West province in 1995. Both groups contend that the SCYL is not a faction of the SCNC. On its website the SCYL vows to "use all available means including force" to achieve its goals of "bringing freedom to the suffering and persecuted people of the Southern Cameroons."

The Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALP) is similar to, but unaffiliated with, the SCNC. Its primary concern centers on UN General Assembly Resolution 1608, adopted in 1959, which terminated the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration. The resolution recognized the Northern Cameroons as joining Nigeria on June 1, 1961, and the Southern Cameroons as joining the Republic of Cameroon on October 1, 1961. The people of the Southern Cameroons decided in a UN supervised vote to join the Republic of Cameroon. The Ambazonia Liberation Party claims the resolution has never been implemented correctly, and therefore the "occupation" of southern Cameroon by the Republic of Cameroon is unlawful. Its aim is to secede from the rest of Cameroon and form its own sovereign state.

The ALP, while fairly active ten years ago, is now mainly confined to activities in the United States. It has organized protests in front of the Cameroonian Embassy in Washington and written to various high level American officials. It says its members are being persecuted by the Cameroonian government for their political beliefs.

According to the Washington-based National Democratic Institute, SCNC members are likely to be subject to government harassment such as arbitrary arrest. While SCNC activists who are arrested are most often released after a couple of days or weeks, those convicted in 1999 for 1997 terrorist attacks are still in prison. Often SCNC members will identify themselves as SDF when confronted by the police in order to mitigate the harshness of their harassment. While the actual number of SCNC is unknown, estimates place the membership around 200 individuals, the majority of whom reside outside Cameroon.

Undoubtedly, the weak economic situation in Cameroon prompts some of its citizens to seek economic opportunities elsewhere by various means, including seeking asylum abroad. Poverty is endemic, and opportunities for economic advancement are linked to the political situation in the country. Members of the ruling elite have greater access to business opportunities, causing members of the "out" groups, largely Anglophone and other opposition youth, to flee seeking improvement in their livelihood.

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B. Claims Based on Other than Political Considerations

Of the total number of claims filed in 2005 and 2006, approximately 14 percent were based on claims other than political opinion. These include race, religion, nationality, and other social issues.

Race/Nationality: The population consists of more than 200 ethnic groups, among which there are frequent and credible allegations of discrimination. Ethnic groups commonly give preferential treatment to fellow ethnic group members in business and social practices. Members of the president's Beti/Bulu ethnic group from southern parts of the country held key positions and are disproportionately represented in government, state-owned businesses, the security forces, and the ruling CPDM party.

Religion: Freedom of religion is generally respected in Cameroon. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and according to the State Department's *2006 International Religious Freedom Report*, government policy continues to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

Other Social Issues: The law does not explicitly forbid discrimination based on race, language, or social status, but does prohibit discrimination based on gender and mandates that "everyone has equal rights and obligations." The government, however, does not enforce these provisions effectively. Violence and discrimination against women, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against homosexuals are problems. The government restricts citizens' freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and harassed journalists.

Women: Domestic violence against women is common. The law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence. Women's rights advocates asserted that the law does not impose effective penalties against men who commit acts of domestic violence. Women are often denied inheritance and land ownership rights, even when these are codified, and many other laws contain unequal, gender-based provisions and penalties. The law prohibits rape, but police and the courts rarely investigate and prosecute rape cases, though some convictions did result during 2006. The law does not prohibit female genital mutilation (FGM), but FGM is not practiced widely, unlike in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

Homosexuals: Homosexual activity is illegal, with a possible prison sentence of six months to five years and a possible fine. While prosecution under this law was rare, homosexuals suffer from harassment and extortion by law enforcement officials. In addition, false allegations of homosexuality are used to harass enemies or to extort money.

In June 2006 the administration of the Douala-based Eyengue Nkongo College, a private high school, expelled 34 students (including 12 females), alleging they were homosexuals. One female student was arrested upon her expulsion. One woman who lived near the school and two former schoolmates were also arrested. On July 7, 2006, the Douala First Instance Court released

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them after giving them a suspended three-year prison term and a fine of \$50 (25,000 CFA francs) on homosexuality charges.

In May 2005, in an action condemned by the UN Commission on Human Rights, 11 men were arrested at a bar frequented by gays and lesbians in Yaounde and detained for more than one year under anti-homosexuality laws. While in prison the detainees faced harsh conditions and homophobic attacks from other prisoners. Human Rights Watch reported that forced forensic examinations of the men were performed to "prove" they had engaged in homosexual conduct. One of the men died of AIDS-related complications shortly after his conviction, exacerbated by the harsh conditions in prison, according to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. Two of the detainees were acquitted and released while the others were convicted and sentenced to 10 months in prison. They were released shortly after their conviction in June 2006 because they had already spent more than ten months in prison. At least four other men are still detained because of their homosexuality, some without formal charges or trial.

Journalists: The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and while the government continued to restrict these rights in practice, media groups were vibrant and active. The government sometimes invokes strong libel laws to silence criticism of the government and officials. Journalists, particularly broadcast journalists, often practice self-censorship as a result of real or expected government intimidation, harassment, and criminal penalties for speech-related offenses. Secessionists in the southern provinces use pirate radio broadcasts to spread their message.

Individuals generally are able to criticize the government publicly and privately without being subjected to government harassment, though the country's strict libel law results in self-censorship. However, the government prohibits discussion or advocacy of secession, which resulted in numerous arrests of SCNC members in 2006. In 2006 the media rights body Reporters Without Borders noted that "Draconian laws regularly put journalists behind bars."

Security forces, usually acting under the command of local provincial government officials, reportedly continue to restrict press freedom by arresting, detaining, physically abusing, threatening, and otherwise harassing journalists.

Trafficking in Persons: Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for children and women trafficked for labor and sexual exploitation. More details are available in the State Department's *2006 Trafficking in Persons Report* available at www.state.gov.

C. Challenges to Adjudicating Asylum Claims

The State Department has identified the following invalid documents in cases involving asylum: membership cards in unregistered organizations, newspaper articles, letters from non-licensed individuals claiming to be medical authorities attesting to medical treatment as a result of political persecution, fraudulent documents concerning the arrest of a political prisoner signed by actual police officials, photographs of supposed political prisoners in jail cells with police

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officers present, and affidavits by attorneys and bailiffs claiming events that never took place. State Department officials in Yaounde have observed vendors openly advertising to prepare U.S. asylum claims for successful nonimmigrant visa applicants.

Newspapers are often unreliable sources of information as some publications accept paid placements of articles.

Although Cameroon has some problems with human rights and political repression, these problems are not as widespread as in the past.

The State Department has confirmed misrepresentation in many asylum cases involving purported members of the SCNC. Detailed reports of political persecution include photographs, testimony and press articles that have been placed for a fee. Party officials of the SCNC have been found complicit in selling membership cards and other information. SCNC members have told State Department officials that total SCNC membership is approximately 200 and most members already reside in the U.S. Other western governments report active SCNC populations in their countries and have evidence of similar misrepresentation in asylum claims.

The State Department cited fraud in many of the 939 asylum cases it developed last year and all 21 asylum cases it investigated this year on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security. A number of follow-to-join beneficiaries had identical stories and supporting documents. Many presented fraudulent documents to support non-existent child-parent relationships, marriages, and adoptions. In addition, many authentically-issued civil documents were reported to depict false information, having been obtained by bribery. DNA testing confirmed fraud in some cases but many beneficiaries admitted the false relationship when asked for a DNA test.

Many Cameroonian asylum applications include recently-adopted children. While caring for members of the extended family is commonplace, it is extremely rare for Cameroonians to follow the long, expensive, and complex adoption procedures required under Cameroonian law. This process requires multiple court appearances, which individuals fleeing persecution are not likely to make.

Many beneficiaries also admitted their relatives were economic migrants who had not encountered persecution. Inconsistencies have been found even in cases which appear to be straightforward, such as one involving a senior SCNC official, the legitimacy of whose claim seemed apparent because of his position in the organization. However, purported facts in his asylum application were contradicted by the account his wife gave during an interview for a nonimmigrant visa.

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ANNEX I. MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES**CAMEROON PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (CPDM/RDPC)**

Founded in March 1985 as a direct replacement for the Cameroon National Union (CNU) created by Ahmadou Ahidjo, the CPDM draws its greatest support from the Beti population of Centre Province – President Biya's own constituency. However, to a far greater extent than any other party, the CPDM also has a national following and presence, and in the 2002 and 2007 legislative elections it won a majority of seats in all but one of Cameroon's 10 provinces. Although the CPDM's fortunes have become intimately connected to Biya, there is an emerging reformist faction within the party that may become an increasingly prominent force in the coming term.

President Paul Biya

Paul Biya came to power in 1982 following the sudden resignation of President Amadou Ahidjo. Although the latter's anointed successor, Biya suffered an early challenge to his presidency from his predecessor, which faded only following Ahidjo's resignation from the CNU presidency and his move into exile. Since then, Biya has succeeded in solidifying his position and has adeptly manipulated any opposition to his rule. Biya relies on a coterie of allies – drawn mostly from his Beti ethnic group – and his own skill in balancing regional and ethnic influence. He also benefits from the ongoing support of the French government, which regards him as a key ally in the effort to preserve French influence in the sub-region.

CAMEROON DEMOCRATIC UNION (UDC) and Adamou Ndam Njoya

The UDC was founded in 1991 and currently has four parliamentarians. A cousin of the Sultan of Fomban, UDC National President Adamou Ndam Njoya enjoys a unique reputation for probity and integrity among Cameroon's opposition leaders. However, this reputation has been preserved at the cost of a certain detachment from the mainstream of Cameroonian politics. This detachment has not dulled his political ambition, however, and it was always likely that he would challenge Fru Ndi for leadership of the CRRN. Ndam Njoya is less well-known than Fru Ndi and has in the past struggled to convince voters of his capacity to operate successfully at a national level.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT (SDF)

Cameroon's largest opposition party, the SDF was founded in 1990 by John Fru Ndi, an Anglophone businessman from Bamenda, North West Province. Drawing its core support from the Anglophone and Bamileke communities of western Cameroon, the SDF has consistently petitioned for redress of the perceived marginalization of Anglophone and western populations and the reconstruction of the two-state federal system abolished by President Ahidjo in 1972. The SDF is one of the few parties to have resisted co-optation by the regime. However, it has not

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avoided the customary pitfalls faced by the Cameroonian opposition – namely increasing fractionalization and diminishing popular support outside its heartland. Fru Ndi's sometimes unpredictability has caused problems for the party, most recently in the aftermath of the 2002 legislative election when Fru Ndi overruled the National Executive Committee's decision to boycott the National Assembly.

John Fru Ndi

John Fru Ndi is the most prominent leader in Anglophone politics and arguably the most significant opposition politician in Cameroon. Fru Ndi's foundation of the SDF in 1990 is rightly regarded as a key moment in Cameroon's recent history – an event that continues to enhance his stature despite repeated election defeats and the apparent decline of support for the SDF outside its North-Western heartland. Fru Ndi is regularly attacked by members of his own party for his "clannish" and authoritarian style of party management and regularly belittled by the regime for his inability to converse in French, Cameroon's majority language.

OTHER PARTIES

PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT (MP)

Jean-Jacques Ekindi

MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY AND INTERDEPENDENCE (MDI)

Djeukam Tchameni

MANIDEM

Anicet Ekane

SOCIAL MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (MSD)

Yondo Mandengue Black

ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Garga Haman Adjii

UNION OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN CAMEROON (UFDC)

Victorin Hameni Bieleu

UNION OF AFRICAN POPULATIONS (UPA)

Hubert Kamgang

CAMEROON INTEGRAL DEMOCRACY (DIC)

Gustave Essaka Died last year. No new leadership yet, only his widow.

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JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (JDP)
Boniface Forbin

SOCIAL LIBERAL PARTY (SLP)
George Nyamndi

MOVEMENT OF CAMEROONIAN ECOLOGISTS
Fritz Pierre Ngo

PARTY OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY (PDS)
Jean-Michel Tekam

NATIONALISM OF CAMEROONIAN PATRIOTS (NPC)
Justin Mouafo

NATIONAL UNION FOR DEMOCRACY AND PROGRESS (UNDP)
Bouba

Maigari Bello

ANNEX II. CHRONOLOGY

1960	1 January	Proclamation of Independence
1960	5 May	<u>Election of Ahmadou Ahidjo as President</u> Ahidjo was subsequently re-elected unchallenged in 1965, 1970, 1975, and 1980
1961	11/12 February	<u>Referendum finds in favor of Southern Cameroon membership</u> The year following independence in French Cameroon, a referendum was held in British Cameroon to determine whether the Anglophone territory should be incorporated into the newly-independent Republic of Cameroon or into Anglophone Nigeria. While the northern province voted for membership of the Nigerian federation, the southern province voted for membership of Cameroon, becoming West Cameroon in the two-state federal system.
1961	April 21	During the 994th plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 1608, The Future of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration, joined Southern Cameroons to the independent Republic of Cameroon.
1961	14 August	<u>Federal Constitution adopted</u> Under the two-state federal constitution, President Ahidjo retained his position as head of state. West Cameroon Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha was appointed Vice-President.

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- 1966 1 September Creation of the Cameroon National Union (UNC)
Deploying the substantial powers reserved for him under the federal constitution, President Ahidjo pursued an aggressive political strategy designed to undermine opposition to his tenure, particularly from western Anglophone parties. In 1966, this strategy culminated in the creation of the UNC, which under law incorporated all other political parties.
- 1972 20 May Referendum finds in favor of unitary state
In Ahidjo's state-building strategy, the counterpoint to the creation of the UNC was the dismantling of the federal system. The co-optation or suppression of opposition to Ahidjo's program had been so effective that few were in a position to oppose the proposals and the referendum passed by a near unanimous majority.
- 1973 18 May National Assembly elections
Single-party (UNC) legislative elections were also held in 1978 and 1983.
- 1975 30 June Appointment of Paul Biya as Prime Minister
- 1982 4 November Resignation of President Ahidjo
After a year of serious illness and apparent exhaustion, Ahidjo made the surprise announcement of his intention to resign as President in favor of his prime minister, Paul Biya. Ahidjo retained the UNC presidency, however, and was expected to remain a significant force in Cameroonian politics.
- 1982 6 November Paul Biya acceded to Presidency
Despite initial opposition to his succession from the northern barons that backed Ahidjo, Biya's takeover was remarkably smooth, although his control of the party-state was limited by Ahidjo's ongoing control of the UNC.
- 1983 22 August Discovery of a coup plot implicating Ahmadou Ahidjo
Following the emergence of serious tensions between the new president and his predecessor, the Biya regime announced that it had uncovered a coup plot involving northern interests and implicating Ahidjo, who had apparently recovered both his health and his political ambition.
- 1983 27 August Ahmadou Ahidjo resigns from presidency of the UNC
Under pressure from the Biya regime, Ahidjo was forced to give up the presidency of the UNC and to enter into exile. In 1984, he was sentenced to death in absentia for plotting against the security of the state.
- 1983 14 September Paul Biya elected president of the UNC

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- 1984 14 January Paul Biya elected as President of Cameroon
- 1985 21-24 March Foundation of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)
To consolidate his political authority after the delayed trauma of the succession, Biya rejuvenated the structures of the party, promising reform and replacing the UNC with the CPDM, a party that would draw its greatest support from the southern Béti, a group long opposed to the domination of Ahidjo's northern Fulani constituency.
- 1988 24 April Re-election of President Biya
- 1991 5 December Restoration of the multiparty system
Although President Biya had based his authority on a commitment to reform, these promises proved largely hollow. Combined with changing international conditions and protracted economic decline, the lack of genuine political liberalization prompted the emergence of new oppositionist tendencies, including organizations and proto-parties comprised of marginalized ethnic and regional communities. The foundation of the Anglophone-dominated Social Democratic Front (SDF) in 1990 and the large-scale defections of senior CPDM figures to opposition groups forced the regime to legalize opposition parties, if only to avoid a further breakdown of the social and political order presaged by often violent demonstrations in support of democratization.
- 1992 1 March National Assembly multiparty elections
Although the regime successfully resisted calls for a sovereign national conference, it acceded to demands for fresh elections. Such a concession was not sufficient for the SDF, which boycotted the polls. Nevertheless, an opposition party – the northern-based National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) – won 68 seats to the CPDM's 88, raising hopes of the gradual evolution of a competitive system of electoral democracy.
- 1992 11 October Re-election of President Biya in multiparty poll
The presidential poll was controversial. The opposition alleged widespread fraud after Paul Biya was found to have won by a small margin with 39.9% to SDF leader John Fru Ndi's 35.9%. Demonstrations in North-West Province were violently suppressed.
- 1996 18 January New Constitution adopted by National Assembly
Negotiations over a new constitution had begun in 1992 under the aegis of Tripartite Technical Committee. However, while

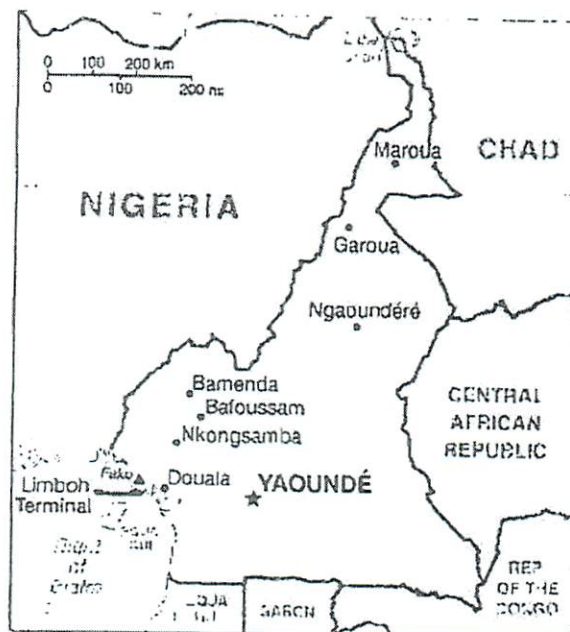
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the regime was prepared to accept the need for dialogue, in practice it sought to limit the input of the opposition and of Anglophone interests in particular. Anglophone appointees to the Committee were in a minority and were further sidelined by government representatives. As a result, the final document retained the unitary character of the state, protected the powers and prerogatives of the president and made it far easier for incumbent regimes to make subsequent constitutional revisions. It also provided for the creation of an upper house, the Senate, 30% of whose members would be appointed.

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| 1996 | 21 January | <u>Municipal elections</u>
The first multiparty local elections were won by the CPDM, which gained control of 65% of communes. |
| 1997 | 17 May | <u>National Assembly election, followed by a second round of elections on 3 August.</u>
In the second legislative election of the multiparty era, the CPDM won 116 out of 180 seats. |
| 1997 | 12 October | <u>Re-election of President Biya</u>
Having come close to losing the first multiparty presidential election in 1992, Biya's enjoyed an easy victory. |
| 1997 | 7 December | <u>Formation of government including opposition parties</u>
Following the election victory of 1997, the regime announced the formation of a government including members of the opposition, most notably Bello Bouba Maigari, the leader of the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP). The co-optation of opposition figures had begun. |
| 2000 | 6/7 December | Enactment of laws on party financing and national election observatory |
| 2002 | | <u>National Assembly election</u>
In 2002, the CPDM won 149 of 180 seats in the National Assembly and a majority of seats in nine out of ten provinces. The SDF representation was reduced to 22 seats – all in North-West Province. Although there were some reports of electoral fraud, there is some doubt as to whether a more transparent poll would have resulted in a significantly different outcome. |
| 2004 | 11 Oct | <u>Presidential elections return Paul Biya to office with 70% of the vote</u> |
| 2007 | 22 July | National Assembly Elections. In two rounds of voting, the 2007 legislative elections gave a total of 153 seats to the CPDM, 16 to the SDF, 6 to the UNDP, 4 to the UDC, and one |

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to the MP. The July election and September 30 repeat election in 17 constituencies were marred by irregularities.



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