

The Travails of Democratization in Cameroon in the Context of Political Liberalisation since the 1990s

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ABSTRACT

Nurturing Cameroon's fledgling democracy is proving a herculean task against the backdrop of disintegrative forces: flawed electoral process, ethnicity, identity consciousness, clientelism, endemic corruption, regionalism and neopatrimonialism inherent in the state apparatus. The undercurrents on the interface of statehood in Cameroon's democratization process from the '90s are explored. There is an enormous gulf between the state and the masses with the elite playing a prominent role in political sloganeering and regionalism, leading to a heightened sense of exclusion. The bureaucratic ethos still remains largely centralised despite the discourses on decentralisation. The simmering Anglophone problem is still brushed aside. The paper illuminates on the disruption and fragmentation of national politics which has led to the emergence of identity and ethnic constructions in the search for belonging to the polity. The question of legitimacy and civic participation is largely distorted due to the

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disinterestedness of the populace in the state machinery. This is rendered more fluid by the manipulative tendencies of the regime, ruling elite and a fractured opposition. The fundamental question is whether Cameroon was adequately prepared for multiparty politics. Rekindling Cameroon's botched democratic process hinges on the institutionalisation of consensus building, democratic accountability and participative governance.

Introduction: General Issues and Objectives

The recent economic and political debates in most African countries are hinged on the neoliberal paradigm and its attendant measures of state downsizing, liberalisation, privatisation and the decline in state developmentalism. Thirteen years after the introduction of political reforms in Cameroon, the democratization process is still in a stalemate. The Cameroonian body politic is threatened by an avalanche of potentially disintegrative factors arising from the disjointed democratic process and the enthronement of corruption that leads to the plundering of vital state resources. Even more worrying is the recycling of discredited politicians and the personalisation of the state machinery by the political elite that has, in the process, dashed the expectations of Cameroonians. The nation thrives on a dicey patchwork of national unity and integration and buzzwords like "peace," "unity," and "stability." These nebulous concepts, which have become mere rhetoric, are central to the political ideology and discourse in the context of liberalisation in Cameroon.

With the advent of multiparty politics in the early '90s and the liberalisation of political and economic life engendered by the liberty laws, the hopes of Cameroonians were rekindled in the national polity that conjectured better days ahead. This euphoria was soon to become a mirage as the political dispensation tended to conceal significant discontinuities of a potentially disruptive nature. The obsession with "peace" and "stability" (Markovitz 1977), leaves unanswered, the all-important questions: stability for whom, at what price, and for whose benefit? Despite the promising trend toward multiparty elections in sub-Saharan Africa, a number of countries are in danger of slipping back into outright authoritarian rule. Such is the case with Cameroon today (Gros 1995).

I intend to situate the disjointed and disintegrative elements that have punctuated the democratisation process of the nation, dating from the '90s. This is examined against the backdrop of the rift between the state and the citizenry. Democracy exists (Sartori's conception, 1987) when the relation between the governed and the government abides by the principle that the state is at the service of the citizens and not the citizens at the service of the state, that the government exists for the people not vice versa.

Like most African states, Cameroon has been drawn into the vortex of a difficult democratic transition at both empirical and theoretical levels. The colonial order gave way to a post-colonial order (Olowu et al. 1995) that is authoritarian and insensitive to the general weal. Widespread evidence of political liberalisation in Africa notwithstanding, there is compelling reason to fear that the movement toward democracy may contain within itself the seeds of its own undoing (Lemarchand 1992).

The present state of political affairs has been hijacked by the political elite who have occupied centre stage of the crumbling state apparatus (see Konings 2000; Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998; Clapham 1991). Democracy has been trivialized to the point that it is no longer threatening to political elites around the world, who now embrace democracy and democratic legitimacy without subjecting themselves to the notorious inconveniences of democratic practice (Ake 2000). The machinations of the elite orchestrated through political sloganeering have led to hegemony, divide and rule and a pauperised citizenry that have withdrawn from the state apparatuses. In the circumstances, the populace through elite manipulation has taken recourse to social identities and ethnic enclaves in the continued search for representation. Most African countries remain severely divided on various grounds. And ethnic divisions have proved a major impediment to the attainment of stable democracy all over the continent (Horowitz 1993).

After three major elections — 1992, 1997, 2002 — coupled with the impending presidential elections (2004), there is general disenchantment with the electoral process. The elements that constitute the travails are massive rigging, non-registration of voters, low civic participation, a plethora of unfulfilled electoral promises, sterile political debates occasioned by the trading of accusations of illegitimacy between the ruling party, the Cameroon's People Democratic Movement (CPDM) and other opposition parties, constitute benchmarks of state failure. Even more preoccupying is the disorganisation within major opposition parties like the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP), the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU), the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC). Their failure to produce a unique candidate and other miscalculations in past elections derailed the transition process (see Mbaku 2002). One prominent concern (Lemarchand 1992) centres on the inability of opposition forces to achieve unity as a result of the unbridled ambition of opposition leaders — hence their inability to put together a coherent political program. Opposition fragmentation and the weaknesses of existing institutions are traceable to the inherently fractious character of African societies. Even more disturbing is the worsening economic conditions. As Ziyad Limam (1991) puts it, 'with nothing to eat, the right to vote

is derisible.’ Democracy cannot take root when minimal standards of economic well-being are not met. Given the facts of economic dependence, and regardless of their ability to institutionalize the formal trappings of democracy (Lemarchand 1992), Africans will still have little or no say in shaping their economic destinies.

In Cameroon, the opposition’s major worry is the centralised electioneering process still under the tutelage of the Minister of Territorial Administration a crucial arm of the ruling government’s rigging machinery. The famous saying by the erstwhile Minister of communication (Augustin Kontchou 1993), that “you cannot bite the finger that feeds you” is instructive of the highhandedness and undemocratic nature of Cameroon’s fledgling democracy. The deep animosity between the regime in place and the opposition falls in line with the complex dialectic between government and opposition (Lemarchand 1992) with the former trying to impose its priorities on the latter, until the costs of obduracy seem to exceed the benefits of compromise. Olowu et al. (1995:17) note that the paradigm of governance not only failed in the past as a system, but led to serious and in some cases disastrous consequences for the economy and people of Africa — wars, political violence, economic decline, and systematic governmental decay.

This paper analyses the stalled multiparty system and charged political atmosphere of the nation that hinges on parochialization and ethnicisation of government and politics in Cameroon. It deals with the causes and the manifestations of political fragmentation, the rise of ethnicity, the nature of political elite, and the Anglophone issue.

The scenario of fragmentation is likened to contemporary Nigeria where the state is wrongly politicised, so sectionally focussed and full of individual enthusiasm to convert any socio-political position and social responsibility into materialistic resources that the threat of societal collapse is apparently not distant (Otite 1995). The fragility of the base on which statehood rests in significant areas of the developing world (Clapham 2002), together with the recent development that further weakened that base, nonetheless provide the setting for any analysis of state collapse that must always be borne in mind. Beyond the limited prospect of state collapse lies the forlorn hopes of development apparent in many regions of the world, and beyond this lies the broader crisis of the modern state system (Milliken and Krause 2002). Anyone searching for causes of the failed transition to multiparty democracy must look to the circumstances that attended the birth of postcolonial Cameroon. Amongst others Gros (1995) cites the excessive dependence of civilian leaders on the military and the French; the inequitable terms of unification between the French and British parts of the trust territory which made the allegiance of Anglophones questionable; over

centralization and a virtually unchecked presidency; a fractured opposition hobbled by narrow goals and leaders too vainglorious to band together. More so, a high degree of uncertainty is connected to the array of strategic counter measures that African autocrats (Lemarchand 1992; Horowitz 1993) have devised to stave off growing threats to their hegemony. It has reduced rather than enhanced democratic prospects.

Nowhere is the phenomenon more evident than in neopatrimonial regimes, where the state is but the extension of the ruler's household, where office holders act as vassals or retainers, and where resistance to democratization is the instinctive reaction of leaders and followers alike (Lemarchand 1992). Paul Biya, presiding over a government supported mainly by Beti¹ and Bulu and opposed by all the rest, benefited from an opposition divided along ethnic lines and an election boycott in 1992 by the SDF (major opposition party). Biya put together a legislative coalition in which his party is dominant, and won a plurality in the presidential election (see Horowitz 1993; Mbaku 2002). In the event, the democratization process has been thwarted because of manipulation and strategic countermeasures.

The concept of democratization has been a bone of contention amongst different scholars. From personal dictatorships, constitutionalism, troubled transitions to multiparty politics and politics of inclusion/exclusion, African political regimes have experimented with a wide array of regime types (see Chazan et al. 1992; Horowitz 1993; Lemarchand 1992; Mbaku 2002). Focussing on Cameroon, the thrust of this study is to look at the social dimension of democratization. The contending issues are that the welfarist and developmental aspects of democracy have been thwarted by a dearth of consensus. Government is purportedly elected but is not responsive to the needs of the populace and provision of basic amenities is contingent on the degree of abiding loyalty of the regions masterminded by its political

¹ It should be noted that the Beti is a heterogeneous tribe that covers a geographical spread of three provinces: the Centre, South, and East provinces of Cameroon. The Bulu along with the Ewondos, Etons, Yezum, Baya, and the Makaa are ethnic groups subsumed under the dominant Beti tribe. They share a common historicity and nearly similar cultural attributes, but have slight disparities in their languages. Indeed, in the context of multipartyism and the carving of geopolitical regions amongst political parties contingent on the voting patterns, the Beti tribe has been very loyal to the CPDM party. In general, the Bulu people, by virtue of their grip on power, are dictating the pace of politics since President Biya hails from the Bulu ethnic group of the Beti tribe of the South Province. It should be noted that the Bulu group belongs to the core ruling clique and holds very strategic positions in government. However, the other ethnic groups represented in top administrative positions and governmental machinery are generally referred to as the Beti.

elite. The promise of social development is compromised by the disillusionment of the electorate, low civic participation, a rupture in the democratic social dialogue; and the lack of palpable socio-economic progress. The continuing scramble over resource allocation, ethnic manipulations, and undemocratic balancing of regional development engineered by the elite have serious underpinnings on consolidating the democratic process. Given the circumstances, the populace, which has been reduced to mere spectators than actors, is searching for new ways of coping and reorganizing through self-reliant development initiatives. We argue that the construction of a socially responsible democracy that is result-oriented, based on reciprocity, driven by social justice, accountability and participative governance constitutes the way forward.

Politics of Fragmentation and Ethnic Divisionism

While ethnicity deserves attention, the truth is that Cameroonian politics has become institutionalized and complex enough to warrant a strong focus on governance-related factors (Gros 1995). In severely divided societies, ethnic identity provides clear lines to determine who will be included and who will be excluded. Since the lines appear unalterable, being in and being out may quickly come to look permanent. In ethnic politics, inclusion may affect the distribution of important material and non material goods, including the prestige of the various ethnic groups and the identity of the state as belonging more to one group than another (Horowitz 1993). The stark reality of Beti hegemony in Cameroon is revealing. Most of the ministers and other top government functionaries hail from the Beti ethnic group. If one considers that about 55% of the Senior Divisional Officers (S.D.O's), Divisional Officers (D.O's) and District heads hail from the Beti heterogeneous ethnic group, then we can't expect free and fair elections. These marksmen of the Ministry of Territorial Administration belong to the ruling ethnic clique. They are condemned to pledge their loyalty to 'the powers that be' (See *The Messenger* and *La Nouvelle Expression*, September 2003 on startling statistics of the Beti hegemony and supremacy in Cameroon's administration).

The political atmosphere in Cameroon is marked by a heightened sense of apathy and exclusion. Instead of efforts at nation building and statehood — *prima facie* for the construction of a nascent democracy, the political terrain has led to the creation of fissures for ethnic cleavages with bearings of national destabilization. In the absence of state levelling mechanisms, politics have provided a critical means for personal and group demands and advancement subject to manipulation by the elite. Failures and successes in such cases are then interpreted in ethnic terms and "ethnicity, then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, inspiring competing organisations and

scapegoating” (Kasfir 1979:51). The consciousness of ordinary people is regenerated due to the retreat of the state and failure to deliver. This consciousness may take the form of community, primary groups, social identities, ethnic associations which have been resorted to as self-help schemes to stem the decay of infrastructure, to pool resources for economic ventures and to provide necessary services for the community (Ake 2000; Jua 2001). The South West Elite Association (SWELA), the North West Elite Association (NOWELA), the elites of the Grand North representing the interests of the three Northern provinces of Adamawa, North and Far-North, Essingan defending the intents of the heterogeneous Beti and Bulu tribes, Sawa representing the interests of the Littoral, Lakam, flag bearers of the Bamilekes of the West Province. Quite apart, a pressure movement like the Southern Cameroon’s National Council (SCNC) is putting forward claims for Anglophone secession. All these groupings are glaring examples of the search for incorporation and belonging, thereby putting to question the viability of the national unity project in Cameroon. This sprouting of withdrawn identities with potential for agitation is engineered by the clamour for democratic participation and the deepening economic crisis which has led to stiff competition for scarce state resources. Associational life (Ake 2000) is booming from the vanishing legitimacy of the state and the withdrawal of identity and loyalty, fear and suspicion and even hostility. The development is not framing a dialectical unity; it amounts to an exit option, namely, the dissolution of the state. However, it is argued elsewhere (Horowitz 1993) that these ethnic affiliations provide a sense of security in a divided society, as well as a source of trust, certainty, reciprocal help, and protection against neglect of one’s interests by strangers.

Xenophobia is a prevalent feature in Cameroon’s democratic dispensation. It has led to ethnic jingoism, brazen provocation and the formation of ethnic militias. In most places in the South West Province, non-indigenes of the Province (especially those of North-Western extraction) are reminded prior to elections that they are non-natives or strangers raising the question of identity consciousness and elite manipulations. Those who work contrary to the interests of the ethnic group are threatened with exclusion. The Divisional Officer charged with overseeing the registration of voters in the 2002 polls blatantly told non-indigenes to go and register in their Province of origin. There was a doctoring of electoral registers based on ethnic origins (see *The Post*, April to June, 2002). The Prime Minister (son of the soil), Peter Mafany Musonge even distinguished his national brethren when he told the former not to let the ‘graffis’ (those from the grasslands of Cameroon) have any control on the councils in Bakweri land (*The Post* No. 0387, 2002). This epitomises the parochialism of public figures in Cameroon. In most cases, non-natives are reminded of the enormous

facilities and resources that the province had put at their disposal warranting their support on matters of politics. In the South West Province, the ‘settlers’ syndrome’ is rife. This refers to non-indigenes from other parts of Cameroon (especially the North Westerners) and Westerners residing in the Province. During the 1997 elections, the then Governor, Oben Peter Ashu gave firm instructions that non-indigenes produce residence permits before qualifying to vote in Kumba town of the South west Province. During the June 30th 2002 twin elections (Municipal and Parliamentary) most non indigenes were disenfranchised. The registration of voters was selectively done and the distribution of voters’ cards haphazardly carried out to frustrate voters through systematic shuffling between polling stations. Those who could not identify their names after several rounds became disenchanted and gave up. The researcher and others who turned up at the Divisional office prior to the elections (2002) were reminded by the Divisional Officer (D.O.) that if they could not find their voters cards, they should go to their respective Provinces of origin and register. The gravity of the situation is glaringly portrayed by the fact that the opposition parliamentary candidate of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) Party — Kofele Kale (himself from the South west Province), could not get a voters card despite the fact that he was the contender for the party in the said elections (*The Post* No. 0384, 2002). The National Elections Observatory (NEO) created by the government to monitor elections hasn’t the capacity for guaranteeing free and fair elections. The question of its legitimacy and neutrality is highly contested given the massive fraud capacity that has been associated with the ministry of territorial administration since 1992. Ethnocentrism which consolidates ethnic exclusion and promotes ethnicity has led to the appearance of sectarian interests. Such ethnic tendencies are highly inflammable during elections as ethnic groups are manipulated in the electioneering process. In the run up to the twin elections (2002), *The Post*, No. 0377, 2002 documented the grave electoral fraud secretly orchestrated by the Senior Divisional Officer of Fako. The S.D.F. accused the S.D.O. for expunging the names of ‘graffis’ (those of North Western and Western extraction) from the electoral lists and concocting new lists with names of voters jumbled up in areas where they do not reside. In a press conference held in Yaounde on May 28, the Secretary General of the SDF lamented the illegal move by the Fako Administrator. The SDF scribe noted that the Fako SDO acted “with impunity, in the total absence of the ‘observatory’ which were supposed to act like supervisors” (*The Post* No. 0377, 2002). This act coupled with the systematic refusal by administrators to receive the list of opposition contenders in certain constituencies is indicative of the high degree of tribalism and electoral fraud ingrained in Cameroon’s body politic.

Even traditional rulers and chiefs who by the nature of their positions are supposed to be the paragon of impartiality and neutrality indulge in political demagoguery and peddling of ethnicity. One notes with dismay that South West Chiefs declare themselves campaign managers for the CPDM, during the extraordinary General Assembly of the South West Chief's conference, Kumba June 10, 2002. In attendance were prominent elite of the Province and a personal representative of the Prime Minister, who hails from the Province. The President of the conference was unequivocal: "Our illustrious son heads the government of the party in power and the fine road down which we have, this morning, travelled to this beautiful school complex, is one of the many worthy achievements of his government. Besides, the party in power has always fully [met] the aspirations of our people" (*The Post* 2002). In one of the dozen resolutions adopted at the meeting, the chiefs called on all 'settlers' whom they said were enjoying the rich natural resources of the Province, to respect and support the interests of their hosts at the polls. The PM's representative, Elvis Ngolle Ngolle did not mince words "Our objective is to win all the 15 parliamentary seats and 27 councils in the South West Province and to register higher voter participation. As you move through the length and breadth of this Province in the few days to the elections, bear in mind that the South West Province is faced with a strategic choice: to consolidate the gains that we have achieved through hard work or to lose these and go back to the margins of the national power equation and development." Perhaps, the PM's representative was alluding to the equation to attain politico-economic advantages and competition for scarce resources and positions. As Orite (1995) notes, the lack of government-sponsored amenities often provides grounds for the leading elite to mobilise people for ethnic protests and ethnic clientelism. Ihonvbere (1994) argues that in a context where the state, is absent, "the masses turn to ethnic, religious and philanthropic organisations for hope, leadership, self-expression and support."

State disintegration is not distant when the political terrain is not levelled. Prior to the 1992 presidential elections, all ten Provincial Governors summoned to Yaounde (September 20, 1992) were routinely "instructed to do everything fair and foul, to ensure at least a 60 percent vote for President Paul Biya in their respective provinces." Each governor was armed with a 60 page document entitled "Techniques of electoral fraud" (see *The Post*, No. 0382 and Gros 1995). The governors were also instructed to execute exceptional security measures, taken by government, to ensure that all citizens accept the results, by severely repressing any acts of violence resulting from discontent, following the declaration of results. One of the governors who hails from the North West Province, George Achu Mofor, exposed electoral fraud and bolted out by way of a resignation letter ad-

dressed to President Paul Biya on October 19, 1992 (*The Post* 2002). The post elections violence that ensued showed the cracks in the state apparatus and polarisation along ethnic lines. The molestation of Anglophones, Bamilekes especially in the South Province and likewise with some southerners in the North West Province is instructive of the institutionalisation of tribalism and regionalism. The cleavage and violence that accompanied the struggle between the Beti and Anglo-Bami students (1990-1991) during political liberalisation is captured by Konings (2002). The deep seated animosities and simmering tensions between these ethnic groups were transferred to the political arena following the 1992 post elections violence that rocked the nation. The autochthonous Beti students who tended to support the ruling party, the CPDM, led by President Biya who is himself a Beti, versus the Anglophone and Bamileke “strangers” lumped together as “Anglo-Bami” who generally supported the main opposition party, the SDF, led by the Anglophone John Fru Ndi. Through the setting up of ethnic militias, Bamilekes and Anglophones were molested in Beti territory (South, East, and Centre Provinces). These clashes were also common in parts of the Northwest and Western Provinces against some Beti indigenes. Many political activists, journalists and students, particularly Anglophones and Bamilekes were arrested and tortured (see Konings 1996). In Yaounde and other Beti towns, the autochthonous population found it unacceptable that Anglo-Bami “strangers” or “settlers” (Konings 2002) would try to help the SDF to gain power. As “strangers,” they should not try to rule in the home region of their landlords but instead should vote CPDM or else go home and vote for their own party. On several occasion, Beti mobs and vigilante groups attacked Anglo-Bami property in Yaounde while the security forces stood by indifferently (Nkwi and Socpa 1997). Strangely enough, the ‘stranger syndrome’ has incited resentment and disaffection between the two English provinces as a result of state manipulation. Indigenes of the South West refer to their Anglophone brothers and sisters from the North West and sometimes the Bamilekes of the West as ‘graffis,’ ‘cam no go’ and ‘settlers.’ This has brought to limelight the identity construction, ethnic question and primitive regionalism in Cameroon’s polity.

In the pre and post election violence, some citizens are used as scapegoats in the settling of scores. Election polling officers who find themselves in predominantly ruling party and opposition strongholds become victims of conflicts in their efforts to monitor the counting of ballots. Auto-defence mechanisms, thuggery and ethnic militias are a prevalent feature. Three officials of the SDF party were exiled from their native Ekondo-Titi for spearheading campaigns for the SDF (*The Post* 2002). They sought refuge at the residence of the SDF Chairman in Bamenda. Under such circumstances, the non-indigenes are tagged with stereotypes as ‘graffis,’ ‘settlers,’

‘cam no go.’ In a tale by victims of political violence in Ekondo-Titi, recounted by James Mbah, following the June 30th 2002 elections, the auto-defence and ethnic militias (set up by an elite) molested non-indigenes: “You SDF Fellows, you graffi people, we will teach you that this town belongs to us” (*The Post* 2002). The police that are supposed to guarantee public security are accused of passivity and have often acted as spectators. The police confessed that they were helpless because the militias were backed by a minister from the region. Such ethnic groups (Otite 1990) are “natural groups with ready-made cleavages for man-made conflicts and alliances in a wider state system.”

The Anglophone Dilemma

At independence in 1960, French speaking East Cameroon was economically more developed than the former British Southern Cameroon. Unless increased investments were made in order to bring the latter up to par with the rest of the country, the Anglophone region would languish as a backwater (Gros 1995). The assertion is germane given the different historical and cultural legacies. Although there are many political fault lines, the most political conflict would pit English speakers against Francophones. The English speaking provinces have a long standing desire for decentralization leading to the establishment of a genuine federation between West and East Cameroon. President Biya has steadfastly refused any step in this direction. The future not only of Cameroonian democracy but also of Cameroon itself (Gros 1995) as a peaceful and united republic may well hinge on how the tension between Anglophones and Francophones is resolved.

As argued elsewhere (Konings 1996b; Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997; Mbaku 2002), the Anglophone minority deeply regrets its vote for reunification with the Francophone majority in 1961, feeling marginalized, exploited and assimilated by the Francophone-dominated state and Francophones as a whole. In the wake of Biya’s accession to power in 1982, they began to protest openly against their allegedly second-class citizenship in Cameroon and a call for a return to the federal state or outright secession. The Anglophones are decrying not only marginalization but exclusion and an ingratiating position in the new political dispensation. Out of 42 ministerial positions, they occupy two insignificant ministries (Transport, Environment and Forestry) (see the *Messenger* No.004 2003, *La Nouvelle Expression* September 2003 and *Insight Magazine* (Impounded edition) November 2003) for astounding statistics on Beti confiscation of power and other top government functionaries). The Prime Minister (an Anglophone from Fako division of the South West Province), a figure head and his position, is deemed as a token representation to assure Anglophones of

inclusion in the polity. The bifurcated nature of Cameroon's society, with a vocal and increasingly defiant English-speaking minority that prides itself on being "uncontaminated" by *la République*, is worrying. The All Anglophone Conferences (AAC I and AAC II) held in Buea, 1993 and Bamenda, 1994 is an indication of the unique character of the problem. These conferences were sanctioned by a declaration for the former and a proclamation for the latter. They all spelled out the genesis of the problem and their disposition to engage in meaningful talks with the Biya regime. Unfortunately, this continues to be brushed aside by the regime in place. The dearth of infrastructure and vestiges of British colonial rule have collapsed. The case of the Tiko, Bali airports and key institutions like the National Produce Marketing Board, a lifeline of the agricultural drive of Anglophones, collapsed. Added to this sordid state of events were attempts at tampering with the educational system of Southern Cameroonians. This was resisted vehemently by Anglophones (See Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997; Nyamnjoh 1996a). Recently, the privatisation of the Cameroon Development Corporation, one of the oldest enterprises with its history closely linked with the political and economic history of Anglophone Cameroon provoked ethno-regional protest from the Bakwerians of the South West Province (see Konings 2003). The cleavage between Anglophones and Francophones is only one amid the complex pattern of cleavages that cut across Cameroonian society (Gros 1995). The regime in place has been cold on the Anglophone problem. Instead, to safeguard the unitary state, it has opted to creating divisions among the English-speaking elite, remunerating some allies with prestigious positions in the state apparatuses, outright repression of the leaders of the Southern Cameroon's national council and repressing all actions designed to change the status of Southern Cameroon (see Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 2000; Oben 2002).

In advanced democracies, generally the citizenry is consulted through a referendum on issues that border on the wider intricate interest of the functioning of the state. This process is completely absent in the Cameroon political context given the degree of reticence by the government on the all-important Anglophone problem, which has threatened the very fabric of the nation and the continued reunification with Francophone Cameroon (Ngoh 1999). The government has true to type, devised various strategies to safeguard the unitary nature of the state. This includes attempts to ignore or even deny the existence of an 'Anglophone problem.'

Elite and Political Sloganeering

Instead of being a public force, the state in post-colonial Africa tends to be privatized by the ruling elite. The only way for elites to secure life and property and some freedom is to be in control, at any rate, to share in the

control of state power (Ake 2002). The elite in Africa (The World Bank 1993) is generally too undisciplined and incoherent to initiate and carry out a development project. That is one of the major differences between them and the elite in the fast developing Asian economies, notably Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Taiwan. Chazan et al. (1992) contend that the aim of the African political elite is to affect political decisions, strengthen their position in hierarchy, have a say in moulding of policy and as a result increase their share of the political pie. The objective of these demands often cast in class, ethnic or ideological terms, is to alter the uses of state power. In Cameroon we see the political elite canvassing for votes, projecting identity consciousness, paying lip service to statehood and nationhood and jockeying for posts of responsibilities on the grounds of regional representation and thriving in divide and rule politics. Fatton (1988) argues that the African ruling classes are attempting to establish their hegemony through the control of the state: In Africa, class power is state power: the two are fused and inseparable.” Until politics is secularized and “tamed,” — that is until there is sufficient protection for the human being as such — the stakes will be too high for politicians to surrender their power and step down (Sartori 1995). Mbaku (2002) notes that elite-driven, top-down, non-participatory constitutionalism left Cameroon with institutional arrangements that discouraged entrepreneurship but enhanced political opportunism (e.g. rent-seeking and corruption). State expansion afforded prebendal and patronage possibilities and was seen by the African political elite as a valuable mechanism in the consolidation and maintenance of political power (Konings 2003).

In resisting democratisation and keeping the status quo, the ruling elite or dictator has resorted to a strategy of defending the old order by use of ethnic ideology (Ake 2000). The prevailing practice in post-colonial Africa and Cameroon in particular is that those in power are inclined to share it only with a very small coterie of collaborators. Often the state is effectively privatised in the control of this small group, whose most powerful members are usually drawn from the leader’s community, religious faith, geographical region or ethnic base. The phenomenon of exclusion and monopoly of power is prevalent in Cameroon. The government’s handpicked elite or barons (Jua 1991; Van de Walle 1990) serve as transmission belts between the President and the different ethnic groups. Thus every important ethnic group feels represented within the regime and thus able to exercise some influence on government policy. Loyal followers in the ethnic-client network (Konings 1996; Jua 1991) are rewarded by appointments and nominations to state offices, granted access to state resources, and rent-seeking opportunities. The self-seeking elite in Cameroon are not interested in crafting a viable economic programme

to address the economic malaise. The corrupt practices by these venal politicians have seriously affected the national economy (Jua 1991). The elite have become political demagogues and ideologues canvassing for votes and manipulating the electioneering process. The subordination of the economic order to the political order reigns supreme and ethnic groups are compensated based on the momentum of its elites to garner support for the ruling party. This has led to the “motions of support” syndrome and ethno-regional politics in Cameroon (Mbuagbo 2002; Mbuagbo and Akoko, forthcoming).

Sloganeering and Demagogy

The political terrain is marked by the canker worm, the elite, with attendant effects on the social and political fabric. They play a crucial role in the organisation of interest-groups along their rent-seeking lines by manipulating the fluidity in the state machinery. Their attempts at state construction and reconstruction have proved futile due to ethnocentrism and politics of the belly that has the potential for disintegration, rather than national integration. For instance, the slogan below from the FAKO I Joint section of the CPDM is informative.

“CAMEROON PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT”

“UNITY-PROGRESS-DEMOCRACY”

“FAKO I SECTION-LIMBE”

At an enlarged executive meeting grouping three wings of FAKO I SECTION held at the secretariat on Tuesday 29th July 2003, members after deliberations geared towards the impending Presidential elections of 2004 resolved as follows:

1. That considering the peace and stability reigning in the entire territory;
2. Considering the relentless efforts of the CPDM led government in the fight against the AIDs pandemic;
3. Considering the healthy socio-economic climate enjoyed by all and sundry in Cameroon;
4. Considering the President’s urge to fight against poverty;

RESOLVES:

Underscoring the items here enumerated, urge President Paul Biya, National Chairman of the CPDM and head of state of the Republic of Cameroon to present his candidature as incumbent candidate for the impending Presidential election of 2004.

Affirm our resolve and commitment to grant him a 100% vote at the said election.

DONE AT LIMBE THIS 29th DAY OF JULY 2003.

SIGNED: JOHN ELUFA MANGA WILLIAMS

YCPDM SECTION PRESIDENT, FAKO I
LYONGA RACHEL CELESTINE
WCPDM SECTION PRESIDENT, FAKO I
MOTANGA ANDREW MONJIMBA
CPDM SECTION PRESIDENT
FAKO I.

Fako being the birth place and political constituency of the prime minister, the Bakweri kith and kin through selected CPDM party officials are reciprocating Biya's gesture of appointing their 'illustrious son' by pledging their unflinching support and loyalty. When the P.M. (Peter Mafany Musonge) was appointed to the high office in 1996, he declared in a reception organised by his constituency: "President Paul Biya has scratched our back, and we shall certainly scratch the Head of State's back when the time comes." He went further: "The first time in our history as a united nation that a south westerner has been appointed prime minister." In the circumstance, "South westerners had to come together to galvanize the second political awakening and to strengthen their position and bargaining power" (see *The Herald* 1996; *The Post* 1996; *Cameroon Tribune* 1996). This is instructive of ethno-regional politics in Cameroon. The slogans are unleashed by the rising social demands and sharpened ethno-regional political competition for resources not evenly distributed. Horowitz (1993) notes, in divided societies, the sense of an ethnic group as a community and its competition with others to constitute the whole community create a strong impetus toward party organisation along ethnic lines.

Recently (early 2003), some elites of the Grand North proved some political pundits of the CPDM wrong when they tabled a memorandum of protest on collapsing infrastructure and Northern marginalisation in Cameroon's evolving political dispensation. The ruling party usually considered the North its '*l'enfant chéri*'; but they were taken aback by the move. In a CPDM counter rally held on the 13th and 14th July, 2003 in the Northern Provinces, the authors of the memorandum were tagged unpatriotic individuals, intellectually dishonest fellows, detractors who are preaching division and regionalism. In the resolutions that sanctioned the meeting, militants resolved to stand fully behind President Paul Biya in the forthcoming presidential election. Dubbed a thanks giving and remobilisation tour, placards carried messages like "*Unis et sorde, nous gagnerons avec RDPC*" (in unity, we would win with the CPDM), "Paul Biya is the Unique candidate for the North" (CRTV news 15/07/03). According to the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, Marafa Hamidou Yaya '*Le Grand Nord ne peut se développer tant qu'il ne se range pas derrière le RDPC*' (see *Mutations*, July 2003). As is common place, projects such as roads, pipe-born water were promised. Key Northern personalities

in attendance were Cavaye Yegue Djibril (Speaker of National Assembly), Marafa Hamidou Yaya and other top elites in the likes of Baba Amadou, Sally Dahirou Françoise Foning, Jean Bertrand Ndongo, Adji Abdoulaye, and Emmanuel Nguiamba Loutsiri. A prominent elite of the CPDM who opted for anonymity had this to say concerning the ceaseless motions of support that are jamming the Presidency in the wake of the forthcoming presidential elections (2004): “We indulge in sending motions of support and political campaigns to sell the manifesto of our party. It is also a strategy to lobby for projects for our constituencies from the national government. Development projects and provision of basic amenities like roads, schools, health centres, telephone etc. can only go through, based on the capacity of the elite to mobilize the electorate and to gather support for the ruling party. This is orchestrated through carefully worded slogans to pledge allegiance (Personal Communication 2003). As a Corollary, John B. Ndeh (Minister of Transport), on his maiden tour of his North West Constituency following his appointment to the coveted position had this message for his CPDM followers: “*Politics na njangi*,” “*you robe my back, I robe your own*” so a quid pro quo game. To him, the Province is left in the cold because it chooses to militate in the opposition which offers no meaningful development. ‘*Motions of support*’, as they are currently employed in Cameroon, are not designed to enhance national integration, nor improve governance and a redistribution of state resources. Instead, they serve one overriding purpose: to enhance the ability of ethno-regional elites to indulge in primitive accumulation (Oben, forthcoming, my emphasis). This kind of existential democratic context (Oтите 1995) is hinged at all costs on a spurious majoritarian rule. These self-seeking sectional politicians use sloganeering as a veneer for development and infrastructural provisioning to constituencies that comply with their ideologies. The system of reciprocal assimilation of elites is one of the factors responsible for a self-reproducing thieving ruling class (Bayart 1993).

These slogans and motions of support that are commonplace, coming from the various ruling party organs throughout the nation, are often given great media coverage. They show the bifurcation of the state along ethno-regional lines. In the circumstance, the state survives by preying on alleged division among socio-cultural groups and regions. More precarious is the allocation of the state investment budget which is determined by the voting pattern of the regions. In this connection, the North West Province, solidly behind the SDF, is witnessing a scanty presence of the government in terms of development and is considered one of the most deprived Provinces in the country. This situation can be discerned from the fact that for the past 12 years, its provincial investment budget has been one of the lowest despite its large population. Erstwhile Secretary of State No.1 in the ministry

of National Education (Joseph Yunga Teghen) 2002 indicated that “any person who looks at the investment budget in Cameroon will see that the distribution of the budget is done following the voting pattern in the country.” To buttress his point, the 2001-2002 state budget showed that the large and populated North West Province had an investment budget of barely FCFA 5 billion. The South West which is comparatively smaller had about FCFA 16 billion. This is definitely because the South West is seen by the government to be predominantly behind the ruling party — the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (*The Post* No. 0355, 2002).

The hegemonic character of the state and rent-seeking along ethnic lines is captured by Jackson (1987) in his concept of ‘quasi states’ in post-colonial Africa:

The State in Africa is more a personal — or primordial — favouring political arrangement than a public-regarding realm. Government is less an agency to provide political goods such as law, order, security, justice or welfare and more a fountain of privilege, wealth and power for a small elite who control it... Many governments are incapable of enforcing their writ throughout their territory. In more than a few countries... Some regions have escaped from national control ... [and the states] are fairly loose patchworks of plural allegiances and identities somewhat reminiscent of medieval Europe. (Jackson, 1987:527-8)

The elite are seen to be overwhelmingly preoccupied in the sharing of the national cake without any concern for its baking. This is informed by the plundering of vital state resources for vested and sectarian interests. Durkheim’s (1958) theory of anomie in explaining the desire for what he called “super abundant status symbols” and corruption by people who know no bounds in the search for wealth through economic crimes is explicit. In spite of the ostensible crackdown on endemic corruption, Cameroon’s corruption rating by Transparency International (Berlin Based NGO) has not changed drastically. From the premier position in 1998, 1999 and 8th in 2003, there is every reason to still worry. Corruption has to do with practices for personal aggrandisement that rob the state of its vital resources. This may be through embezzlement or swindling of state funds. In the event, meritocracy suffers and mediocrity thrives, for to survive one has to play by the rules. Durkheim’s theory assumes that behaviour and expectations of human beings are subject to social control and restrictions in a situation of equilibrium. In a state of disequilibrium, human beings seek inextinguishable novelties and wealth. Where the limits between what is possible and impossible, just or unjust are unknown, a state of deregulation, normlessness, or anomie and frustration occurs. This is exacerbated by rapidly changing values induced by the struggle over limited access to scarce material and political offices and resources. By

and large, Jua (1991), deviant behaviour on the part of state authorities only helps to alienate civil society from the state and has debilitating repercussions on the quest for state legitimization. State resources could be used to forge the ethno-regional alliances necessary for national unity and political stability and to obviate the need for coercion (Konings 2003).

State Clientelism and Patronage

State patronage and clientelism serve to consolidate regimes by offering access to state resources in exchange for political acquiescence (Boone 1990). The highhandedness and undemocratic nature of governance has led to state failure in Cameroon. Rigour and moralisation, ideals preached as far back as 1982 by President Biya's "*New Deal Regime*," have become empty words. Corruption in various circles of public life is the order of the day. *The swindling of public funds by top government functionaries is prevalent and interventionism, clientelism and nepotism have become the guiding principles of governance* (Cameroon Calling 2002, my emphasis). Clientelism as used in the study is the practice of mismanaging state resources to buy over loyalists. It is a pattern of distributing sinecures through ethno-client networks. Some CPDM officials who embezzle, swindle or loot state funds go unpunished by hiding under the canopy of the party. The pauperisation and impoverishment of the populace is affecting efforts at combating corruption. Civil servants called upon to resist and fight corruption in the public sector are living in destitution following the drastic 50% wage reduction of 1993 that was compounded by a 50% devaluation of the CFA Franc, the national currency in January 1994. The privatisation of many state companies and parastatals far from jumpstarting the economic growth (Jua 1991) have instead created and exacerbated unemployment and lay-offs.

The temptations of corruption, manipulation, and co-optation are rife. The phenomena have taken disturbing proportions, raising public acrimony over the reckless abandon with which public finances are being mismanaged and looted (Websi 2002). A worrying practice is the plundering of vital, yet scarce state resources during political campaigns. The government uses strategies like "*Majorité Présidentielle*" (weak parties aligning with the ruling party during major elections based on some agreement). These are mechanisms for posturing and used to defuse the pressure from stronger opposition parties. In addition, through manipulation of parliamentary procedures, opposition attempts to call for revision of electoral laws has faced stiff resistance. In the best of neopatrimonial rule (Lemarchand 1992), the incumbent is able to sate the appetites of enough presumptive clients to drive a deep wedge leading to the fractionalization of opposition parties (see Gros 1995; Horowitz 1993; Takougang 1993; Van

de Walle 1994; Lumumba-Kasongo 2001). The opposition UNDP was co-opted into a platform with the ruling CPDM in 1997. This has not worked out leading to the fragmentation of the UNDP that grabbed just one parliamentary seat in the 2002 parliamentary elections.

Most government top functionaries are placed or place themselves on state-sponsored missions for weeks in the course of electoral campaigns. This weighs on the budget of the Ministerial Departments and institutions. Work in some vital government departments are grounded during such periods as the 'bosses' are away giving the leeway for junior staff to be absent from work. It becomes difficult to distinguish between the party and state in the political process. There are repeated cases of misuse of state funds in party campaigns and elections. Some directors of state corporations and parastatals are compelled to swell party coffers for electioneering purposes. Ultimately as Mutahaba (1989) observes, the party supplanted the machinery of state and the difference between the two become blurred. The award of public contracts is clandestinely done. Most government functionaries take contracts without the requisite expertise and know-how. In the circumstances, they sublet such contracts in return for huge amounts as kickbacks.

The famous 30% that is lost by those chasing dossiers or contractors paying for their tenders to go through is illustrative of endemic corruption. The reason why most contracts are poorly executed, or abandoned mid-stream is due to a result of insufficient funds. Despite the creation of the Public Contracts Regulatory Board, the state is still bedevilled by endemic corruption. This is compounded by the absence of a legal framework for monitoring and adjudication. With the complicity of some stores accountants, government is made to pay for supplies that are never delivered or for low quality items. The recent and massive acquisition of very expensive administrative vehicles is a disturbing scenario. The administrative car pool of most ministerial departments is replete with fleets of very expensive four-wheel-drive jeeps, some costing as much as eighty million CFA francs, and most of which are not even used for government duties but to drop and pick up the children of the boss, do his household shopping and run private errands while workers in the same service carry out assignments on foot or by public transport (Websi 2002).

In order to respond to populist expectations for an overhaul of the electioneering machinery, the government created the National Elections Observatory (NEO) and the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, yet, they have remained a façade of democracy. These bogus schemes have opened further vents for the plundering of state resources. The NEO is dissolved after every election (Section 3(2) immediately they have submitted their report for the President's perusal as requested by

section 19 of the decree setting it up. Section 3(i) of the law states “NEO shall be put in place during each election year at the beginning of the electoral process. It shall comprise 11 members appointed by presidential decree” (*The Post* 2003). This organ instead of concentrating on registration and civic mobilization is rendered a lame monitoring mechanism that cannot guarantee free and fair elections. Since members are appointed by the President, they are bound to pledge their loyalty and support. The pattern of democracy in most nascent African democracies is illiberal, conjures a centralization of power around the presidency, and the pervasive clientelism that structures the relationship between the state and the citizenry (Van de Walle 1990).

Amnesty International has noted the flagrant violation of human rights in Cameroon in 2002 and 2003. Extra judicial killings and disappearances at the hands of security forces are part of the political landscape of Cameroon. Security forces continue to maltreat citizens, political activists and pressure groups like members of the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC). The sad case of the nine adolescents in the famous “*Bepanda 9*” detained on February 2001 on suspicion of stealing a cooking gas bottle, and disappearing while in detention at Bonanjo, Douala under the *Commandement opérationnel*, a special anti-crime unit of the gendarmerie, is informative of extra-judicial killings in Cameroon (*The Post* 2003, my emphasis). Recently on July 9th 2003, the bloody confrontation between motorcycle transporters (Ben sikins) in New-Bell Douala and the police leading to the death of two of the transporters signals the disjuncture between the police and hapless civilians. Little doubt that Transparency International (2003) classified the police corps as the most corrupt in Cameroon. In spite of the massive human rights violation, there are no viable mechanisms for civilians to lodge complaints. The 1990 laws on liberty and freedom remain cosmetic. The chairperson of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms acknowledged that the issue of human rights in Cameroon remains problematic. He lamented on the administrative bottlenecks and blockages in treating human rights violations expediently since reports have to be scrutinized by Administrative authorities concerned before being transmitted to the Head of State. He attributed the fragility of its operational structures and non-effectiveness to the fact that the commission was created by Presidential decree and not by the constitution or the law that would have given it greater leverage (see interview granted *Mutations*, July 2003). In a televised interview (2003), he also intimated that the issue needs to be addressed, given that civil, political, social, economic and even cultural rights are continuously violated on a daily basis. As a result, human rights are still to become a way of life and culture in Cameroon (Cameroon Radio Television 2003). Such bogus democratic schemes are

yet to provide the leverage for representation. Civilians are worse off by the total loss of credibility in the police and Judiciary — levelers and vital instruments of social justice. The masses in their frustration are increasingly implanting vigilante groups to provide the much needed security. It is not uncommon to hear our forces of law and order tell a desperate caller that there is no vehicle or fuel to come to his/her rescue when under attack from bandits or armed robbers.

Conclusion and Democratizing Options

The study has looked at the advent of political pluralism and the expansion of the political space with undercurrents of fragmentation in the social order in Cameroon. From the prognosis, it is evident that underneath the state building option is a flawed democratic process and other disintegrative elements like ethnocentrism, clientelism, corruption, bribery, regionalism, nepotism, sloganeering, patronage and neopatrimonialism. These factors represent visible benchmarks of the failure of democracy and have the potential for creating a conflictual phenomenon if not well managed. With a fractured opposition, a cagey incumbent willing to do almost anything to stay in power (Gros 1995), Cameroon's multiparty politics and democratization process is in a stalemate. Milliken and Krause (2002) observe that practically and conceptually, the 'state' is again under siege. Authors like Kaplan (1994) present a vision of future chaos resulting from the withering away of the central governments of modern states in favour of tribal domain city-states, shanty-states [and] nebulous and anarchic regionalisms.' The political dispensation in Cameroon is marked by rising political apathy and the registered concerns of exclusion and alienation.

Reworking and overhauling the democratic machinery remains the way out in state deconstruction in Cameroon. In line with efforts towards national integration, Cameroonians should be made to revisit their history through the engagement of all forces and entities in meaningful dialogue and national reconciliation. This will permit meaningful and frank discussions with political parties, minority groups and a pressure group like the SCNC movement that are decrying Anglophone marginalization and political despondency with their menacing secessionist tendencies.

The elite should desist from political sloganeering, demagoguery and the state from its patronage, clientelistic, and ethno-regional networks. These scenarios lead to tensions and a disruption of the social order. Elite should indulge in consensus and confidence building measures towards forging a broad based involvement of citizens in state affairs leading to democratic maturation. The state should emphasize more a redress of the economy to permit Cameroonians to enjoy the fallouts of economic growth.

Ushering in democracy in Cameroon hinges on devolving power to the Provinces or regions. This underscores the decentralization option, a model of fostering citizens' participation, especially at the grassroots tiers of state-like local government including municipal and rural councils. The 1996 Constitution carved out ten regions, yet they are still to become autonomous. However, a return to the pre-1972 federal arrangement is a plausible option of accommodating the ethnically and linguistically diverse peoples of Cameroon. It remains the most veritable avenue for expressions of cultural distinctiveness and also serves to compartmentalize friction. Government Delegates and Gubernatorial positions should become elective. These efforts will permit citizens to address the burning problem of infrastructural provisioning with local efforts. This will bar the way to elite manipulation which becomes a leeway of ethnic complaints and neglect.

Private sector initiatives should be stimulated by a reduction of cut-throat taxes that act as a disincentive to investment. Citizens should be encouraged to participate in building a viable informal sector that will lead to empowerment of minority and disadvantaged groups and the enhancement of livelihoods.

Political parties should be more responsible, patriotic and defend the sovereignty of statehood. They should strengthen women's wings/bureaus in order to foster greater participation of women in politics. This will increase representation and empowerment of the populace to identify with state institutions since women constitute a majority (52%) of the population. An independent electoral commission should be put in place by parliament to oversee the registration, polling and declaration of election results. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation has failed in the organization of elections. A viable constitutional mechanism that is people-driven, participatory, democratic (Mbaku 2002) can best contribute to the management of ethnic conflict and the strengthening of civil society. Promising polities like Senegal, Kenya, and Zambia represent a beacon of hope that there are prospects for democracy to take root in Africa. For Cameroon to join these competitive democracies, State reconstruction through inclusive constitution-making is the way out. Unless such a process is undertaken (Mbaku 2002), Cameroon will not be able to provide itself with an enabling environment to deepen, consolidate, and institutionalize democracy.

Curbing endemic corruption, bribery and patronage in the state mechanism remains the most potent way of rekindling the interest of the citizenry in building solid democratic structures. The anti-corruption observatory and units in the ministries should be popularized, manned by neutral morally upright persons, guaranteed autonomy and independence in their

modus operandi. They should be imbued with a legal framework to enforce the declaration of assets by public officials as spelled out in article 66 of the constitution. Those found culpable of mismanagement and embezzlement of state funds should be sanctioned with the Judiciary playing its role as the arbiter of probity and justice.

Rebuilding Cameroon's fragmented democratic process rests with civil society actors like the Churches, NGOs, trade unions, other professional bodies etc., which should be empowered as effective countervailing force against elite sloganeering and plundering of state resources. All concerned forces in civil society should be marshaled in the state building project. The state should identify and support civil society actors that are adept in service delivery. Larry Diamond's (1994) notion of civil society is very germane in this case, "the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating (largely self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules). It is distinct from "society" in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. If civil society is strengthened, it will address the factionalization and struggle for ethno-political supremacy by the elite as they battle for political representation in the modern state structure. The pervasive clientelism that is the legacy of neopatrimonial politics will impede the emergence of civil society for years to come. In the nations of Africa, democracy is neither inevitable nor impossible. In none of them is civil society wholly mature, but in none is it wholly absent. Indeed, even where prospects for the emergence of civil society seem dimmest, there are significant grounds for hope in the active 'watchdog' role played by human rights and religious organisations in denouncing the abuse of the patrimonial state (Lemarchand 1992). The churches, civil organisations and NGOs have to shoulder this responsibility. As a consequence, the elite that have torpedoed the democratic process in Cameroon will be put to check.

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