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Opposition and Social-Democratic Change in Africa: The Social Democratic Front in Cameroon

PIET KONINGS

This article assesses the role of opposition parties in Africa's democratic transition by focusing on the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in Cameroon, one of the largest and most popular opposition parties in Africa. Several explanations are offered as to why the SDF has failed to seize power and effect social-democratic change in the country and why the party displays a lack of consensus on the so-called 'Anglophone problem'. The regime's repressive and divisive tactics, western donors' ambivalent and inconsistent attitudes towards democratic governance in the country, and the party leadership's deep divisions about future lines of action and strategy and its growing involvement in prebendal politics are all discussed.

The functioning of opposition parties in Africa's current democratic transition appears still to be understudied and the existing literature usually presents a rather negative picture of their role.¹ Opposition parties are assumed to be small, badly organised, fragmented, ethnocentric and dominated by personal and clientelist relations of power that are claimed to be characteristic of African politics.² And, even more importantly, they are said to lack any clear, well-articulated, socio-economic project that can serve as a viable and credible alternative to existing policies and deepen and consolidate the democratic process. Most electoral campaigns appear to be conducted on the basis of the personality of the opposition leaders, and ethno-regional solidarities.

Opposition parties have to operate in what has been described as 'illiberal democracies'.³ In most African countries, the opposition has been faced with incumbents who have only reluctantly conceded to a multi-party system but have stopped at nothing in their attempts to obstruct, weaken, harass and

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divide the opposition. The latter have not hesitated to employ the public media and the various apparatuses of the state – including the security forces – against the opposition and to extensively rig election results. Today, the opposition is in a state of crisis and disintegrating in the majority of those countries where it has not yet managed to unseat the incumbent regime.

In this article, I focus on the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in Cameroon that was founded in May 1990. Initially, this party appeared to form a notable exception to the generally negative assessment of the functioning of opposition parties in Africa and actually raised high expectations among the urban masses of imminent political and economic change for two main reasons.⁴ First, there was the charisma of its leader, John Fru Ndi, and second, there was its social-democratic message that seemed to be different from the authoritarian and neo-liberal economic policies of the ruling regime. Though never well defined, its message of establishing a truly democratic and just society – translated into simple slogans such as ‘power to the people and equal opportunities for all’ – was easily understood. In the early 1990s, the SDF was so popular among the masses that many observers came to believe that it was only a matter of time before the party would replace the ruling Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM). Today, more than thirteen years after its launch, prospects of a SDF takeover of power appear bleak. Even worse, and similar to most other opposition parties in Africa, the party has lost most of its initial appeal and its leadership is deeply divided on policy issues and strategy, and characterised by opportunism and ‘prebendal politics’.

In the first part of this article, I describe the rapid expansion of the SDF, its message and its major actions during its heyday in the early 1990s. In the second part, I explain the reasons for the loss of the party’s initial momentum and its failure to capture power.

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE SDF

Following independence and reunification in 1961, Cameroon moved quickly towards the establishment of a one-party state and the concentration of power in the president that was justified by the ruling regime in terms of essential prerequisites for national unity and development.⁵ This political system remained largely intact until 1990 when widespread popular discontent emerged with the deepening economic and political crisis, all the more marked because Cameroon had been one of the most prosperous and most stable countries in Sub-Saharan Africa until then. The majority of the population held the corrupt, authoritarian Biya government responsible for the unprecedented economic crisis, resulting in the loss of its legitimacy. General discontent was fuelled by the increasing monopolisation of political and economic

power by the Beti, President Biya's own ethnic group. This signified a striking departure from the policy of his predecessor, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1961–82) who had attempted to achieve 'ethnic balancing' by co-opting representatives of the various ethnic groups into a hegemonic alliance.⁶

In addition, with the move towards democratisation in Eastern Europe, Cameroonians, like Africans elsewhere on the continent, began to demand political reforms including the introduction of a multi-party system, rule of law, and freedom of association and of the press. This went far beyond the modest political reforms introduced earlier by the Biya government.⁷

It was in these circumstances that the first opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), was formed in Bamenda, the capital of North West Province in Anglophone Cameroon. Its charismatic leader, John Fru Ndi, a bookseller by profession, defied government orders prohibiting the founding of the party and chose 26 May 1990 as its launch date. On the same day several decades before, Martin Luther King had led a march on Capitol Hill in Washington where he made his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech, setting the stage for the liberation of blacks in American society. In his short speech to the massive rally in Ntarikon Park in Bamenda, Fru Ndi declared:

Today is the most significant day in the struggle for democracy in Cameroon Democracy has never been handed down to a people on a platter of gold . . . We have set as one of our goals to rid the Cameroonian society of a system that deprives people from being free men or otherwise punishing them for daring to think freely, associate freely, assemble peacefully and freely We call upon you to stand up and be counted amongst those who share our democratic ideal. You have nothing to lose but the straight jacket in which you, as freeborn citizens, have been cast.⁸

Following this ceremony, six young Anglophones – who became known as the 'May 26 martyrs' – were killed by the security forces. The state-controlled media tried to distort the facts and to deny government responsibility for this bloody event and a demonstration by Anglophone students at the University of Yaoundé in support of the SDF and the introduction of a multi-party system was brutally suppressed.⁹ The demonstrators were falsely accused by the regime of having marched in favour of the re-integration of Anglophone Cameroon into Nigeria and of singing the Nigerian national anthem and raising the Nigerian flag.¹⁰ Leading members of the ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Party (CPDM), strongly condemned the Anglophones for their 'treacherous actions' and what they considered as the premature birth of multipartyism in the post-colonial state. Their reaction to these peaceful demonstrations shocked many people, particularly because alternative political parties were not prohibited by the 1972 constitution.

The government's overreaction to the launch of the SDF and its continual persecution of the party must be understood in the context of what is called the 'Anglophone problem'. Several factors need to be taken into consideration in explaining the emergence and development of this problem.¹¹ Its roots can be traced back as far as the partitioning after World War I of the erstwhile German Cameroon Protectorate between the French and British victors, first as mandates under the League of Nations and later as trusts under the United Nations. The subsequent creation of territorial differences in language and cultural legacy laid the historical foundation for the construction of Anglophone and Francophone identities. An even more important factor was the form of state that the Francophone majority more or less imposed upon the Anglophone minority during constitutional negotiations for a reunified Cameroon in 1961. The Anglophone political elite had proposed a loose form of federation, which they considered a safe guarantee for the equal partnership of both parties and for the preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of each side. The Francophone political elite instead opted for a highly centralised form of federation that they considered as merely a transitory phase in the establishment of a unitary state. By 1972 they had already succeeded in transforming the federal state into a unitary state. The most decisive factor, however, was the nation-state project after reunification. For the Anglophone population, nation-building has been driven by the firm determination of the Francophone political elite to dominate the Anglophone minority in the post-colonial state and to erase the cultural and institutional foundations of Anglophone identity. Gradually, this has created an Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being recolonised and marginalised in all spheres of public life and thus becoming second-class citizens in their own country. It was not until political liberalisation in 1990 that various associations and pressure groups were created or reactivated by members of the Anglophone elite to represent and defend Anglophone interests in the Francophone-dominated state. Although the most important organisations initially called for a return to the federal state, the persistent refusal of the Biya government to discuss any related constitutional reforms eventually forced them to adopt a secessionist stand.

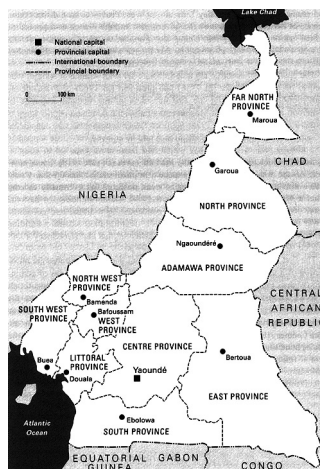
There is general agreement that the launching of the SDF was a decisive factor in changing the political landscape in Cameroon. Under considerable internal and external pressure, the government introduced a greater measure of political liberalisation.¹² In December 1990 it announced the advent of multi-partyism, as well as a certain degree of freedom of mass communication and association, including the right to hold public meetings and demonstrations. As a result, several political parties, pressure groups and private newspapers were set up in Cameroon and began to oppose the regime.

Like most other opposition parties that have emerged during the current political liberalisation process in Cameroon and other African countries,¹³

the SDF never appears to have developed any elaborate political or economic programme. The charisma of the party leader is more likely to attract a mass following than any explicit ideology. Since the tragic death in 1958 of Ruben Um Nyobe, the legendary leader of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC),¹⁴ no other politician in Cameroon has captured the imagination of the masses with such enthusiasm as John Fru Ndi, the chairman of the SDF. His populist style of leadership has had a wide appeal. Unlike most other Cameroonian political leaders, he usually wears customary dress, he predominantly speaks Pidgin English (the *lingua franca* of the masses), and is admired for his courage and outspokenness. As a result of Fru Ndi's growing popularity, the party was able to extend its membership from the Anglophone to the Francophone area, notably in the neighbouring West and Littoral Provinces (see Map 1). In fact, Francophones soon outnumbered Anglophones in the originally Anglophone party. Most of the party's approximately 60-per-cent Francophone membership belongs to the 'entrepreneurial' Bamileke, who are closely related to ethnic groups in the North West Province.¹⁵ The Bamileke are inclined to see the SDF as a springboard to political power.

Examination of the party's most important initial documents, the 1990 *Constitution* and *Manifesto* and the 1991 *Proposals on Devolution of Power*, reveals an ideologically fluid mixture of populist, liberal and social-democratic elements. The composition of the initial party leadership may be

MAP 1
REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON



a significant explanatory factor for this ideological blend. In addition to the populist Fru Ndi, the party leadership consisted of members of the radical intelligentsia and other sectors of the middle classes, particularly teachers and lawyers, as well as some businessmen and entrepreneurs. The major tenets in the SDF basic documents are the following:

- the establishment of a 'healthy and true' democracy. In this respect, the SDF has championed the achievement of a transparent and accountable form of governance, the separation of executive, legislative and judiciary powers, free and fair elections, freedom of expression and association, the rule of law and respect for human rights. To introduce fair and free elections, the SDF has continuously advocated the introduction of an independent electoral commission.
- the need for participatory democracy. In its 1991 Proposals on Devolution of Power, the SDF attempted 'to put into concrete form and detail its avowed slogan of Power to the People'. By introducing a large measure of decentralisation, the party proposed 'to put an end to the former system bedevilled by overcentralisation of decision-making with a huge bureaucracy at the centre' and 'to get the common people themselves directly involved in their own governance'.
- the promotion of a market economy, free enterprise, and the right to private property.
- the creation of a welfare state, with particular concern for the underprivileged in society. The SDF promised the introduction of free health care and education, an improvement in the living and working conditions of urban and rural workers (better housing, electricity and roads), the creation of employment for the youth, and an improvement in the position of women in society.

Although these basic documents failed to provide a credible political and economic blueprint for achieving these objectives, they succeeded in attracting not only the urban masses – formal and informal-sector workers and the unemployed – but also business people and entrepreneurs.

The party's message – embodied in simple slogans like 'power to the people and equal opportunity for all', 'change' and 'suffer don finish (SDF)', a Pidgin English expression meaning 'your suffering has come to an end' – was well understood by the masses. They came to believe that by voting the SDF into power, they would finally obtain a say in the decision-making process and would be freed from exploitation and oppression.

The first years of political liberalisation raised high expectations among SDF members of an imminent change in regime and a reconfiguration of state power in their favour. The party's enormous expansion and growing

confidence put the government on the defensive, being unsure of how to handle the sweeping force of the new political upstarts. The SDF's weekly rallies and demonstrations, its fiery rhetoric and violent threats, and its bold defiance of the regime were all phenomena unimaginable in the three long decades of predictable and colourless one-party politics.

The leaders of the SDF helped to turn most of the country, with the notable exception of the Beti region, into a veritable hotbed of rebellion, leading to several vehement confrontations with the regime in power. This was particularly the case during the 1991–92 'ghost town' campaign, which was essentially a prolonged demonstration of civil disobedience organised by the SDF and allied opposition parties to try to force the Biya government to organise a sovereign national conference like those previously held in other African countries such as Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, Mali and Zaire.¹⁶ This was a period when the public was requested to immobilise the economy by staying indoors, blocking streets, refusing to pay taxes and bills, and boycotting markets and offices. The slogan adopted by the opposition alliance in favour of a sovereign national conference was '*fait quoi, fait quoi, il y aura*' ('nothing will prevent it being hold'). When Biya replied in a speech before the national assembly that it was '*sans objet*' (pointless), the whole country reportedly went up in flames.

By October 1991, however, the 'ghost town' campaign had run out of steam, and the regime then found it opportune to organise what it called a 'tripartite meeting' involving the incumbent government, the opposition and well-known public figures.¹⁷ With the meeting masquerading as a forum in which to reach a compromise on the main political issue – namely the holding of a sovereign national conference – the regime used the occasion to assess the strength of the opposition and, if possible, to divide it.

It soon became manifest that the opposition was unable to maintain a united front in the absence of a common objective and programme. As elsewhere in Africa,¹⁸ the overwhelming majority of the opposition parties in Cameroon existed only on paper, usually having been created by political entrepreneurs to serve personal and ethno-regional interests rather than to mobilise popular forces for genuine change.¹⁹ As a result, the regime eventually succeeded in manipulating and blackmailing most of their leaders. Subsequently, it was able to largely determine the agenda and control the meeting to its own advantage. On 13 November 1991, no fewer than forty of the forty-seven then legalised opposition parties signed the so-called Yaoundé Declaration. They agreed to abandon the 'ghost town' campaign and to defer the sovereign national conference demand pending elections in response to the regime's offer of further discussions on electoral and constitutional reform. The SDF was not prepared to cooperate with the regime and refused to sign the document.

Having split the opposition during this meeting, the regime simply refused to create an independent electoral commission, as had constantly been demanded by the SDF. With a promised reward of FCFA 500 million for each party participating in elections, it lured the majority of the opposition parties into the ill-conceived parliamentary elections of March 1992. There have been disputes ever since about the wisdom or folly of the SDF boycott of these elections. It is beyond any doubt that SDF participation in these contested elections would have given the opposition a majority vote in the national assembly, thus posing a serious challenge to the regime (see Table 1).

The SDF, however, did participate in the October 1992 presidential elections. Although the opposition parties failed to agree on a single candidate, the SDF chairman, John Fru Ndi, performed extremely well in these fraudulent elections. In fact, many Cameroonians and international observers believed that he had won the presidency. It was therefore not surprising that Biya's declared victory was a traumatic experience for the SDF membership, resulting in violent protests against the 'theft of Fru Ndi's victory' throughout the North West Province. The regime then imposed a state of emergency on the province for three months and Fru Ndi was kept under house arrest in Bamenda.

Following the party's failure to accede to political power through either violent confrontation or the ballot box, a number of issues arose that created serious divisions among its leadership, leading to growing disillusionment among the rank and file. Moreover, having survived the most difficult years in its existence, the incumbent regime used all the means at its disposal to contain the SDF threat.

TABLE 1
RESULTS OF LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN CAMEROON

Parties	Number of Seats		
	1992	1997	2002
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)	88	116	149
Social Democratic Front (SDF)	0 ¹	43	21
National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP)	68	13	1
<i>Union des Populations du Cameroun</i> (UPC)	18	1	3
Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU)	0 ¹	5	5
Movement for the Defence of the Republic (MDR)	6	1	0
<i>Mouvement Libéral des Jeunes du Cameroun</i> (MLJC)	0	1	1
TOTAL	180	180	180

Note: ¹The SDF and the CDU boycotted the 1992 legislative elections.

Source: Compiled from various Cameroonian newspapers.

THE ANGLOPHONE-FRANCOPHONE DIVIDE WITHIN THE SDF

Paradoxically, although the SDF and Fru Ndi contributed immensely to Anglophone consciousness and action, the party increasingly presented itself as a national rather than an Anglophone party, as is evidenced by its growing membership in Francophone Cameroon. As a consequence, it adopted an ambivalent attitude towards calls from the newly emerging Anglophone movements for a return to a two-state (Anglophone-Francophone) federation. Its leadership tried to avoid alienating either its Anglophone or its Francophone members but this was not an easy task. The party's Anglophone members tended to be simultaneously supporters of Anglophone movements and were therefore inclined to bring pressures to bear upon the party's leadership to place federalism on the political agenda.

Like most other Francophones,²⁰ the Francophone party members tended to oppose the Anglophone pursuit of a federal state – often equating federalism with secession – and strongly adhered to the preservation of the unitary state. They rightly pointed out that some of the party's basic documents, like the 1990 *SDF Manifesto* and the 1991 *SDF Proposals on Devolution of Power* stressed the importance of national unity, allowing only for a large measure of decentralisation within the unitary state. The Francophone position was even largely backed by the party's Anglophone secretary-general, Dr Siga Asanga, who maintained close ties with the Francophone intellectuals in the SDF leadership, most of them, like he himself, lecturers at the University of Yaoundé. On some occasions, Asanga publicly stated that the party's embrace of the Anglophone cause and federalism would endanger its social-democratic ideology and national appeal.²¹ The issue became even more pertinent when the Francophone majority demanded a more equal representation in the still predominantly Anglophone party executive. Since the party chairman was an Anglophone, the Bamileke, who formed the largest part of the Francophone membership, claimed to be entitled to the post of secretary-general, which was second in the party's hierarchy.

The party chairman, John Fru Ndi, was under pressure from both sides to clarify his position on the growing Anglophone-Francophone divide in the party and he eventually appeared to yield to Anglophone pressure. He openly declared himself to be opposed to Francophone domination of the SDF since the party owed its existence to courageous initiatives and sacrifices by Anglophones. He bluntly added that 'it was unacceptable that a Bamileke would ever become secretary-general of the SDF' – a statement reminiscent of a similar declaration by Joseph Owona during his term as secretary-general at the presidency: 'A Bamileke as President? Never!'.²² Fru Ndi's clarification reinforced Anglophone influence in the party's decision-making organs but served to temper enthusiasm for the party among the Bamileke elite.

At the SDF's Bafoussam Convention in July 1993, some Anglophones explicitly raised the issue of Anglophone marginalisation in the Francophone-dominated post-colonial state, and the delegates subsequently endorsed in principle the idea of a federal form of government. To appease the Francophones, the party refused to adopt the two-state federation as advocated by the Anglophone movements, leaving it instead to the people themselves to decide on the exact form of federation at a future sovereign national conference. Only one year later, on 22 August 1994, the SDF national executive committee modified the Bafoussam declaration of federalism. It now clearly opted for a four-state federation (an Anglophone state and three Francophone states). Partly as a result of his disagreement with the party's endorsement of federalism, Secretary-General Siga Asanga was expelled from the party in 1995. A number of Bamileke and other Francophone party leaders also left the party voluntarily or were forced out. One of them, Dr Basil Kamdoun, then founded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) that was intended to offer a social-democratic alternative to the SDF. However, it never really got off the ground, nor did the Social Democratic Forum created by Siga Asanga to protest his expulsion from the SDF. These leaders simply lacked Fru Ndi's charisma.

From the mid-1990s onwards, there were also repeated, and sometimes serious, conflicts between the leadership of the umbrella organisation of the Anglophone movements, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and the SDF. While the SDF continued to cling to the idea of a four-state federation, the SCNC had in the meantime adopted a secessionist stand following the Biya government's persistent refusal to enter into any meaningful negotiations about a return to a two-state federation. The SCNC's new objective obliged the SDF leadership to distance itself from the Anglophone cause in order to assure the party's survival among its Francophone members. Evidently, it thereby ran the risk of losing support among its Anglophone members.

When SCNC leaders proposed boycotting the 1996 municipal elections, claiming that any elections called by the Francophone-dominated state were irrelevant to an independent Southern Cameroons state,²³ the SDF leadership refused to comply. Relations rapidly deteriorated after the proclamation of the restoration of the independence of the Federal Republic of Southern Cameroons (FRSC) by a SCNC leader, Justice Frederick Alobwede Ebong, on 30 December 1999. On 6 May 2000, the party executive met to discuss the new developments on the Anglophone scene. During a stormy debate it decided to demand the resignation of some important party leaders. Dr Nfor Ngala Nfor, who used to be the chairman of the SDF Constitutional and Political Affairs Committee, was asked to resign because of his recent acceptance of the positions of vice-chairman of the SCNC and vice-president of the FRSC. Dr Martin Luma, the second vice-president of the SDF, was asked to

step down because he had chaired the historic meeting on 1 April 2000 at which Justice Ebong was proclaimed president of the FRSC and Dr Nfor Ngala Nfor was appointed as vice-president. Albert Mukong, a human rights activist and SDF founding member, was also asked to resign because of his persistent militancy in Anglophone organisations. Their departures were clear proof of the SDF leadership's determination to purge the party of 'extremist' and separatist elements in order to maintain the support of its Francophone membership.²⁴

Professor Carlson Anyangwe, another SDF founding father and former SCNC leader who is still working abroad, has also recently distanced himself from the party, identifying himself more closely with the SCNC struggle for an independent Southern Cameroons state. That the SDF leadership is under strong pressure from its Francophone membership to maintain a certain distance from the Anglophone separatist tendencies was manifested again in June 2000 when Mr Chrétien Tabetsing, a Bamileke member of the SDF living in France and who had failed to unseat John Fru Ndi as party chairman during the SDF's 1999 convention, called for an extraordinary convention. The purpose of this convention, he said, was to debate the Anglophone problem that had become such a sensitive issue in Cameroon and was dividing the party into two opposing camps. He claimed that the SDF would collapse and cease to exist should Anglophone wishes prevail.²⁵

On 7 May 2000, the chairman of the SDF, John Fru Ndi, openly confessed that his party was at variance with the SCNC over the strategic options for solving the Anglophone problem. While his own party continues to view a four-state federation as a panacea for the Anglophone problem, the SCNC was, he lamented, beating the drums of outright secession. He strongly condemned some SCNC activists who were issuing threats against the SDF 'in a bid to persuade the party to dance to their independence song'. Instead of combating the Biya regime, the SCNC, he alleged, was now engaged in fighting the SDF.²⁶ A few weeks later, a new clash between the SDF and the SCNC occurred when the SDF decided to participate in the 20 May demonstrations – to commemorate the creation of the unitary state – while the SCNC had called for a boycott.²⁷

Dissatisfied with the party's position towards the Anglophone problem, an increasing number of both Anglophone and Francophone members have left the party and many former Anglophone members have committed themselves exclusively to the Anglophone cause.

THE REGIME'S REPRESSIVE AND DIVISIVE TACTICS AND ITS INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The regime has done everything possible to control the expansion and influence of the SDF and other opposition parties. One of its main strategies has

been repression and SDF leaders and militants have found themselves continuously exposed to harassment, intimidation and violence. A well-publicised example occurred on 3 November 1993 – the day set aside to celebrate eleven years of Biya's presidency – and involved a confrontation between a SDF convoy led by John Fru Ndi and the police in Yaoundé when the police attacked the convoy with water canons. Fru Ndi was injured and his car damaged but he escaped and took refuge in the residence of the Dutch ambassador, subsequently giving an ultimatum for the release of the thirty SDF militants arrested. The police were rumoured to have been intending to kill him.²⁸

Strikingly, the North West provincial governor, Bell Luc René, a Franco-phone, became nicknamed 'Bend Look Grenade' for the excessive use of tear-gas grenades by the security forces under his command to disperse SDF demonstrators, especially during the 1991 'ghost town' campaign and the 1992 state of emergency in Bamenda in the wake of 'Biya's theft of Fru Ndi's victory' in the presidential elections. The government regularly prohibited the SDF from holding rallies and meetings, and the security forces often broke up those that did take place. Contrary to the SDF credo, 'Suffer don Finish' (SDF), the suffering was clearly *not* finished and another reading for its acronym emerged 'Suffer dey (for) Front' (SDF).

Other strategies by the regime to frustrate SDF members' hopes of ever gaining power included the almost complete barring of opposition parties from access to the public media, the constant refusal to introduce free and fair elections, and the extensive rigging of election results.²⁹ Any appeal by the SDF leadership to the courts against such practices was likely to fail since the national judiciary continues to serve the interests of the incumbent regime and not those of the citizens. Indeed, as Nyamnjoh aptly observed,³⁰ 'Today Cameroonians have multipartyism but the one-party logic persists'.

The regime's most important strategy has undoubtedly been divide-and-rule. In the Anglophone region in particular, it has capitalised on the existing ethno-regional tensions between the coastal forest (the present South West Province) and the Grassfields (the present North West Province) people (see Map 1). As argued elsewhere,³¹ a number of factors are responsible for this situation. First, the large-scale labour migration from the North West to the South West where a plantation economy was created during German colonial rule,³² and the subsequent local settlement of northwestern workers. Gradually, these settlers have come to form the majority in many local towns and villages, proving their reputation as entrepreneurs and achieving, along with Nigerians of Igbo descent, a dominant position in the southwestern economy.³³ Second, the transfer of political power from the South West to the North West in 1959, when the North West-based Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) defeated the ruling South West-based Kamerun

National Convention (KNC) and the North West elite started dominating the political scene at the regional and national levels.³⁴ Consequently, although supporting most of the Anglophone grievances about Francophone domination, the South West elite have felt more disadvantaged than their northwestern counterparts in the post-colonial state.

Political liberalisation in the early 1990s fanned the rivalry between the South West and North West elites in their struggle for power at the regional and national levels. The rapid growth of the SDF immediately alarmed the South West elite who feared renewed North West domination over the South West as the SDF was clearly a party organised and controlled by the North West elite. Moreover, although the party, like the former KNDP, enjoyed less popularity among the autochthonous population in the South West than in the North West, it could nevertheless count on massive support from northwestern workers and settlers in the region. In addition, it soon became manifest that the SDF's frequent, and often violent, confrontations with the regime had the paradoxical effect of advancing the political careers of northwestern politicians. The year 1992 witnessed first the appointment of a North Westerner, Simon Achidi Achu, as prime minister – an apparent attempt by the desperate regime to contain the enormous popularity of the SDF in the North West – and later the spectacular performance of the charismatic SDF chairman, John Fru Ndi, in the presidential elections.

Given the intensification of the power struggle between the South West and North West elites during the political liberalisation process, the Biya government found it increasingly lucrative and politically expedient to tempt the 'peaceful and conciliatory' South West elite away from Anglophone solidarity with strategic appointments and the idea that their real enemy was the 'unpatriotic, ungrateful and power-mongering' North West elite.

In response to South West complaints of North West domination, Biya began to appoint South Westerners to key positions in their own province. For example, Dorothy Njeuma was appointed vice-chancellor of the newly created Anglophone University of Buea and Becky Ndivé was transferred from Yaoundé to head the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) station in the South West. Nevertheless, South Westerners still felt underrepresented in higher government positions and constantly requested that a South Westerner succeed the North Westerner, Simon Achidi Achu, as prime minister. So when in September 1996, Biya appointed the South Westerner Peter Mafany Musonge as prime minister and kept more South Westerners than North Westerners in key cabinet positions, 'the South West people ... went wild with excitement and jubilation and loudly praised the Head of State' for having at last listened to the cries of despair of South Westerners, who for over thirty-six years had been 'confined to the periphery of national politics and socio-economic development'.³⁵

Government divide-and-rule tactics culminated in the 1996 constitution that promised special state protection for autochthonous minorities.³⁶ Not unexpectedly, the new constitution boosted South West identity and fuelled existing tensions between South Westerners and North Westerners.

The timing of its release was hardly an accident: it was promulgated only a few days before the 21 January 1996 municipal elections. The South West pro-CPDM elite was shocked when the SDF won most key urban constituencies in their region. South West Governor Peter Oben Ashu immediately blamed the northwestern settlers, who outnumbered the indigenes in most urban areas of the province, for the CPDM's poor performance in the urban areas, and on several occasions he and other members of the southwestern elite ordered them 'to go home'. Before the elections, Nfon Victor Mukete, the Bafaw Paramount Chief in Kumba, had used Bafaw vigilante groups to 'encourage' northwestern settlers in the Kumba municipal areas not to vote for the SDF. The South West elite immediately started demanding state protection for the autochthonous southwestern minority against the dominant and exploitative North Westerners.

Straight after the elections, the government provided the required protection by appointing indigenous CPDM leaders as urban delegates in the municipalities won by the SDF. It is beyond doubt that the Biya regime also rendered assistance after the municipal elections to the so-called Grand Sawa movement³⁷ – an emerging alignment of the ethnically related coastal elite in the South West Province and neighbouring Francophone Littoral Province on the basis of common feelings of exploitation by northwestern and ethnically related Bamileke settlers who were believed to constitute the backbone of the major opposition party, the SDF.³⁸

To those who sought protection as minorities, the price to pay would increasingly be stated in no uncertain terms: Vote for the CPDM. This is exactly what the new prime minister, Peter Mafany Musonge, and other members of the southwestern elite have been telling the people in the region.

During elections, the southwestern pro-CPDM elites have become accustomed either to excluding northwestern settlers from voting in the South West or to bringing pressure to bear upon them to vote for the CPDM. According to the Cameroon Electoral Code,³⁹ every citizen may vote in a locality where s/he has been resident for at least six months or where his/her name is on the income-tax assessment list for the fifth consecutive year. Despite such rules, northwestern settlers, especially those known to be SDF supporters, were frequently barred from voting in their area of residence and were requested to do so in their region of origin (only to discover on their arrival that they were supposed to vote in their place of residence). During a meeting of the South West elite in Limbe in February 1997 it was decided that settlers had to obtain a residence certificate as a precondition for being registered as a voter – a decision which North Westerners immediately condemned as favouring the

party in power.⁴⁰ Although this rule was in clear contravention of the electoral code, pro-CPDM officials and chiefs, like Governor Peter Oben Ashu and Chief Mukete of Kumba, continued to insist on the obtaining of these permits. Northwestern workers, the majority of whom are SDF supporters, have also been subjected to persistent CPDM pressures to support the new southwestern prime minister Peter Mafany Musonge by voting CPDM.

And last but not least, the regime could count at the last moment on international support, despite the donors' regular criticisms of the slow progress of economic and political reforms in Cameroon. France in particular has continued to defend the Biya government, seeing a takeover of power by the SDF as a severe threat to its long-standing vested interests in the country.⁴¹ Its support for the regime was even reinforced by hostile declarations and actions on the part of the SDF chairman. During the SDF's early years, Fru Ndi regularly declared that his party was fighting not only a local dictator but also French imperialism, even calling upon his followers to boycott French goods. France, therefore, did everything it could to make sure that Biya remained in power during the controversial October 1992 presidential elections. A few months afterwards, the French minister of interior, Charles Pasqua, justified French actions by declaring that 'an Anglophone cannot be president of Cameroon'.⁴² When international donors decided to suspend their allocation of structural adjustment loans to the regime after these elections, Cameroon became first on the list of French aid beneficiaries in 1993 and France rescued the regime with two new loans.

According to Fonchingong,⁴³ the French also sought to discredit the SDF and its Anglophone leadership in various ways. For instance, the French secret police are said to have fabricated incriminating documents linking Fru Ndi to illegal arms imports. Moreover, the French ambassador, Gilles Vidal, and other French embassy officials undertook several missions to the Francophone stronghold of the SDF, the West Province, to persuade the Bamileke elite and traditional rulers to distance themselves from the SDF. In addition, they encouraged the regime to create satellite parties with Bamileke leadership so as to weaken local support for the SDF. There are even secret reports that France and the CPDM regime were sponsoring a Bamileke front within the SDF in a bid either to grab the chairmanship of the Anglophone Fru Ndi or spark disorder in the party.

Curiously, the other international donors have never publicly contested French partisanship, most probably out of consideration for the longstanding and close relations between France and Cameroon. While continuously stressing the need for 'good governance', they themselves have actually displayed a rather ambivalent attitude towards the regime, often justified in terms of 'realpolitik'. The United States is a good example in this respect. By the end of 1994, the United States Agency for International Development

(USAID) had decided to stop its activities in the country after having concluded that 'the undemocratic political climate in Cameroon did not permit aid to be utilised in the most judicious manner'.⁴⁴ This drastic action, however, does not alter the fact that the United States has been of great assistance to the regime through regular debt-rescheduling agreements, without which it might have collapsed.

The Commonwealth's performance has been particularly disappointing for the Anglophone population.⁴⁵ Following Cameroon's application for Commonwealth membership in 1989, the SDF and the Anglophone movements frequently appealed to the Commonwealth authorities to keep Cameroon out of the Commonwealth until the Biya government had realised significant democratic reforms, improved its poor human-rights record and accepted the Anglophone proposal for a federal structure. To the consternation of the Anglophone leaders, it was announced on 16 October 1995 that Cameroon had been admitted to the Commonwealth.

There appear to have been two reasons for its admission. First, the Commonwealth found it hard to reject Cameroon's application on the basis of the 1991 Harare Declaration as there was ample evidence that the democratic records of some of its African member states, like Nigeria and Kenya, were even poorer than Cameroon's. Second, the Commonwealth generally believed that admission would be a more effective option than non-admission in terms of the advancement of democratisation in Cameroon. Once in, Commonwealth members would be able to bring pressure to bear on the Cameroonian government to introduce political reforms.

Since admission, the Commonwealth has sent regular missions to Cameroon to urge the government to speed up the democratisation process, including the introduction of fair elections. All these efforts appear to have had minimal effect in spite of repeated promises by the Biya government to execute some of the Commonwealth's proposals for reform and seek financial assistance for their implementation.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the Commonwealth authorities have not yet resorted to any punitive measures, such as the withdrawal of financial assistance, to force the Biya government to comply with the Harare Declaration.

THE SDF IN DISARRAY

Of late, the SDF appears to have lost much of its initial appeal. Many party members who have continued to support the party in the face of frequent harassment by the security forces are becoming disillusioned with the party's apparent abandonment of its initial social-democratic ideals, as well as with its leadership's growing disunity, opportunism and struggles for power. The party that once stood united behind Fru Ndi is now deeply divided and in shambles.

Most observers agree that important divergences began to occur within the party when its leadership took the controversial decision to enter into state institutions after the fraudulent 1996 municipal and 1977 parliamentary elections. It justified its decision in terms of 'opening a new front against the regime'. Many party members, however, specifically contested the party's entry into parliament, which they perceived as an act of legitimisation of the very regime that the party had continuously confronted for seven years. Moreover, they wondered how the tiny SDF parliamentary group, which occupied only 43 out of a total of 180 seats (see Table 1), could pretend to 'cause an earthquake in a parliament dominated by the CPDM'. They became more and more convinced that the party leadership's eagerness to enter parliament was first and foremost motivated by its growing tendency to sacrifice vision and principle for expediency or for what John Fru Ndi himself has called 'belletics', the 'politics of the belly'.⁴⁷ They claimed that their leaders had lost hope of ever taking over power since elections continued to be rigged by the regime, and they were therefore seeking a share of the 'national cake' as a form of compensation for their multiple sacrifices for the sake of the party. In June 2000, the former SDF press secretary, Mr Larry Eyong Echaw, charged that 'the moral high ground on which the SDF stood to criticise the CPDM government had been lost as its parliamentarians are mired in the muddy nature of *Ngoa-Ekelle gombo* (that is the prebendal politics in parliament)'. He even alleged that the party's chairman, John Fru Ndi, was involved in 'belletics' himself because he 'had cast his greedy eyes on the salaries and budgets of SDF parliamentarians'.⁴⁸ His serious allegation was supported a few years later by Sani Alhadji, the former SDF chairman of the Centre and South Provinces. The latter claimed that the party did not keep proper accounts, which facilitated Fru Ndi's entry into the 'bourgeoisie', as is evidenced by his current ownership of the largest plantations and herds of cattle in the North West. Sani Alhadji also revealed how Fru Ndi spent the public subsidy of FCFA 456 million for financing the party's participation in the 2002 elections: he used most of the money to recover his twelve-month salary arrears and to buy two luxury jeeps for private use while allocating only a meagre sum of FCFA 75,000 to each of the constituencies for campaigning purposes.⁴⁹

There was also growing resistance to the party's lack of internal democracy and tolerance towards dissenting views. Real power in the party was increasingly concentrated in its chairman John Fru Ndi and a small group of clients, most of them originating from the same ethnic group in the North West as Fru Ndi, namely the Meta.⁵⁰ Its most prominent members include Joseph Mbah Ndam, leader of the SDF parliamentary group, Professor Clement Ngwasiri, SDF founding member and since 2002 member of parliament, Emmanuel Yoyo, SDF questor in parliament, and Martin Fon Yembe, SDF chairman of the North West Province. It is widely believed that they

have been largely responsible for the party's shift from confrontational politics to rapprochement and have been regularly advocating an extension of the already overwhelming powers of Fru Ndi, which is clearly at odds with the emphasis on collegiality and democratisation of power in the party's statutes. This group of hardliners strongly oppose any fundamental criticism of the party's current power structures, policy lines and strategies.

A group of progressive party leaders condemns the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the chairman and his inner circle as being detrimental to the development of a democratic culture within the party and the democratic image the party advertises. The most prominent reformers originate from the South West Province and Francophone part of the country, including Professor Tazoacha Asonganyi, the SDF secretary-general, Professor Ndiva Kofele-Kale, chairman of the SDF Foreign Affairs Committee, Chief Alex Taku, SDF secretary for propaganda and education, Sani Alhadji, former SDF chairman of the Centre and South Provinces, and Samuel Tchwenko, former Fru Ndi's personal physician and member of the SDF national executive committee. They particularly opposed the tendency of Fru Ndi to personally recruit new party leaders, selecting them almost exclusively from his group of clients. They were shocked when he decided to violently intervene in the election of the party's provincial chairmen in 2000/2001 so as to forestall the election of his critics. They therefore looked for instruments to curtail his powers in these matters.

In the course of 2001 Professor Ndiva Kofele-Kale tabled a motion during a national executive committee meeting in which he proposed the creation of an independent investiture committee responsible for the selection of candidates for party leadership. Not surprisingly, Fru Ndi and his inner circle strongly disapproved of his bold initiative. Two of its members, Joseph Mbah Ndam and Emmanuel Yoyo, used the North West Provincial Conference held at Batibo on 13–14 July 2001 to expose what they called the diabolic intentions of Professor Kofele-Kale and his group in proposing a motion that would strip the national chairman of his powers and thus facilitate his overthrow.⁵¹ In an interview with Radio France International on 20 August 2001, Fru Ndi said that the Kofele-Kale group formed a threat to the unity of the party and were out to destroy it.⁵² During the SDF convention in Bamenda in October 2001, Fru Ndi and his group succeeded in persuading delegates to vote against the motion.⁵³

The conflict between the two camps exploded after the 30 June 2002 municipal and parliamentary elections. On 6 July, the party's national executive committee decided to boycott all the municipal and parliamentary seats the SDF had won at the polls. This decision was taken to protest against renewed massive rigging of the elections and to force the regime to conduct new elections.⁵⁴ Four days later, however, Fru Ndi unilaterally lifted the

embargo and it was soon discovered that his action was part of a secret peace accord with the CPDM that would enable the SDF to negotiate the appointment of some of its leaders into positions in the Biya government.⁵⁵ In protest, a number of reformers, mostly Francophones, then decided to resign from the party. They accused Fru Ndi of being 'more dictatorial than Stalin' and a staunch tribalist who aimed at transforming the SDF from a national into a North West party.

Above all, it is no longer clear what the party stands for. Members are confused by the repeated changes in policies and strategies propagated by the party's chairman, Fru Ndi. A few examples will suffice here. In the first years of the party's existence, Fru Ndi condemned French imperialism and called for a boycott of French goods. A few years later, he was eagerly seeking French support after having painfully realised that he could not do without it in his attempts to seize power. In 1997, he declared: 'No good laws, no elections'. Without having been able to revise the electoral system, he nevertheless called for participation in the 2002 elections. During the October 2001 party convention in Bamenda, he declared in his policy speech that his party would resume its confrontational policies of the early 1990s. A year later, however, he concluded a peace treaty with the CPDM and sought his party's participation in a broadly based Biya government. Party members were astonished when, at the end of 2002, he tried in vain to enter into negotiations with the CPDM about the creation of an independent electoral commission despite the fact that earlier negotiations on this issue had utterly failed in 1998.⁵⁶

As a result of these developments, SDF membership has declined catastrophically and the party's current position is indeed serious. Since the 2002 parliamentary elections, its influence has been largely restricted to its traditional stronghold, the North West Province. The huge crowds attending SDF rallies and demonstrations have decreased in numbers considerably. Most intellectuals inside and outside the party no longer take Fru Ndi seriously, having come to consider him as a major obstacle to democratic change. Increasingly they are asking for his resignation to save the party from total collapse.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to show that the SDF, led by John Fru Ndi, has achieved significant success in mobilising the people for social-democratic change in Cameroon, with the party rapidly becoming one of the largest and most popular opposition parties on the African continent. Paradoxically, the party has failed to either capture power or force the Biya regime to bring about any political transformations that could have deepened and consolidated the country's democratic transition. The euphoria that characterised

the early period following the SDF's appearance on the political scene has been greatly reduced and has made way for disillusionment. The party appears to have lost most of the dynamism that made it a critical force in the country's politics in the early 1990s.⁵⁷

Several reasons have been given in this article to explain the SDF's failure to seize power and effect social-democratic change in the country. First, the party was unable to reach consensus on the Anglophone problem, leading to frequent confrontations between Anglophone and Francophone party leaders and, eventually, to several defections, dismissals and resignations. Second, the incumbent regime has used its control over the state apparatus to set increasing limitations on the freedom and functioning of opposition parties. Moreover, it has been able to divide the opposition, thereby capitalising on existing ethno-regional tensions and conflicts. It has also exploited to the full the ambivalent and inconsistent role of western donors and creditors towards democratic governance in the country. The IMF and the World Bank depend upon the ruling regime's continuous cooperation for the successful implementation of the structural adjustment programme to such an extent that they tend to confine themselves to quiet diplomacy, except in cases of extreme violations of human rights. Conversely, they decline to negotiate with the opposition. They have even expressed their strong disapproval of certain oppositional actions, such as the 1991 'ghost town' campaign, which they perceived as a public onslaught on the already shattered national economy, and as obstructing structural adjustment.⁵⁸ Undoubtedly, in its struggle for survival in the early 1990s, the Biya regime owes a special debt to France, which has tried to safeguard its economic interests in Cameroon by regularly assisting the regime in overcoming internal and external opposition to its rule.

And last but not least, following its failure to seize power, the SDF leadership has become increasingly divided about future lines of action and strategy. It appears to be becoming more and more trapped in the regime's logic of *démocratie apaisée* – the transformation of confrontational politics into participation in state institutions – providing ample space for opportunism and prebendal politics. In many respects, the party has come to resemble the ruling CPDM party: patron-client relationships, a lack of internal democracy, intolerance of dissenting views, and the absence of any clear vision or programme for Cameroon's 'future'.⁵⁹

It is interesting to observe that two recent studies based on extensive samples of election results have come to totally different conclusions about the future of multi-party systems in Africa. On the one hand, Van de Walle's study presents a rather pessimistic view, emphasising the illiberal nature of most of the new African democracies, their characteristic centralisation of power around the presidency, and the pervasive clientelism that

structures the relationship between the state and the citizenry.⁶⁰ On the other hand, Lindberg's study offers a more optimistic view, claiming that there have been significant improvements in the democratic quality of competitive elections in Africa in terms of participation, competition and legitimacy.⁶¹ In my study, I have provided substantial evidence that Cameroon belongs among what Lindberg calls 'deviant cases' in a generally more promising trend in Africa. While Lindberg largely fails to account for such deviant cases, my study shows that Van de Walle's explanatory framework appears to be more helpful in explaining why liberal democracy in Cameroon has stalled.

NOTES

1. Cf. A. Olukoshi (ed.), *The Politics of Opposition in Contemporary Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1998); J.M. Mbaku and J.O. Ihonvbere (eds.), *Multiparty Democracy and Political Change: Constraints to Democratization in Africa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); N. van de Walle and K. Smiddy, 'Partis Politiques et Systèmes de Partis dans les Démocraties "Non Libérales" Africaines', *L'Afrique Politique 2000* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), 41–57; K. van Walraven and C. Thriot, *Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, Research Report No. 45, 2002); and M.A.M. Salih (ed.), *African Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalisation and Governance* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).
2. See, for instance, P. Chabal and J.-P. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); and N. van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and Clientelism in Africa's Emerging Party Systems', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41/2 (2003), 297–321.
3. Van de Walle and Smiddy, 'Partis Politiques'; and N. van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
4. Similar to other political parties in Africa, the SDF has continued to attract a predominantly urban membership. See R. Buijtenhuijs and C. Thriot, *Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1992–1995: An Overview of the Literature* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1995), 89–91.
5. Cf. J.F. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1979); M.W. DeLancey, *Cameroon: Dependence and Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979); and J. Takougang and M. Krieger, *African State and Society in the 1990s: Cameroon's Political Crossroads* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).
6. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun*.
7. P. Konings, 'The Post-Colonial State and Economic and Political Reforms in Cameroon', in A.E. Fernández Jilberto and A. Mommen (eds.), *Liberalization in the Developing World: Institutional and Economic Changes in Latin America, Africa and Asia* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), 244–65; and Takougang and Krieger, *African State and Society*.
8. Quoted in J.F. Gwellem, *Fru Ndi and the SDF Revolution* (Bamenda: Unique Printers, 1996), 12.
9. F.B. Nyamnjoh, *Mass Media and Democratisation in Cameroon* (Yaoundé: Foundation Friedrich Ebert, 1996), 26–7.
10. P. Konings, 'University Students' Revolt, Ethnic Militia, and Violence during Political Liberalization in Cameroon', *African Studies Review*, 45/2 (2002), 179–204. The Anglophone part of Cameroon, the so-called Southern Cameroons, was administered as an integral part of Nigeria during the British mandate and trust era.
11. P. Konings and F.B. Nyamnjoh, 'The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35/2 (1997), 207–29; P. Konings and F.B. Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity: A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003).

12. J. Derrick, 'Cameroon: One Party, Many Parties and the State', *Africa Insight*, 22/3 (1992), 165–77.
13. A. Mehler, 'Cameroon: Une Transition qui n'a pas eu lieu', in J.F. Daloz and P. Quantin (eds.), *Transitions Démocratiques Africaines: Dynamiques et Contraintes (1990–1994)* (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 95–113; Takougang and Krieger, *African State and Society*; and Olukoshi, *The Politics of Opposition*.
14. Cf. R.A. Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroon: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and A. Mbembe, *La Naissance du Maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun, 1920–1960* (Paris: Karthala, 1996).
15. J.P. Warnier, *L'Esprit d'Entreprise au Cameroun* (Paris: Karthala, 1993); and F.T. Tabappsi, *Le Modèle Migratoire Bamiléké (Cameroun) et sa Crise Actuelle: Perspectives Economiques et Culturelles* (Leiden: Centre for Non Western Studies, 1999).
16. A.N.T. Mbu, *Civil Disobedience in Cameroon* (Douala: Imprimerie Georges Freres, 1993).
17. Takougang and Krieger, *African State and Society*, 141–2.
18. Olukoshi, *The Politics of Opposition*.
19. T.N. Fonchingong, 'Multipartyism and Democratization in Cameroon', *Journal of Third World Studies*, 15/2 (1998), 119–36.
20. Konings and Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity*, 154–62.
21. See, for instance, *Today*, 20 March 1995, 1 and 5; and *Weekly Post*, 26–31 July 1994, 4.
22. Konings and Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity*, 152.
23. Southern Cameroons was the name of the Anglophone territory in the period preceding reunification in 1961. Following political liberalisation in the early 1990s, it was reintroduced by the newly created Anglophone movements.
24. See SCNCforum, 26 May 2000, 'Can the SDF Solve the Anglophone Problem?' by N.N. Susungi.
25. *The Herald*, 11 June 2000.
26. SCNCforum, 19 May 2000, 'Fru Ndi Dissociates SDF from Southern Cameroons Independence'.
27. Ibid., 18 May 2000, 'SDF Disagrees with SCNC over May 20 Boycott'.
28. Konings and Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity*, 135–6.
29. The SDF pursuit of power was reflected in slogans like 'Biya Must Go' and 'Sangmelima don Fall' (SDF). Sangmelima is the town where Biya was born.
30. Nyamnjoh, *Mass Media and Democratisation*, 20.
31. P. Konings, 'Mobility and Exclusion: Conflicts between Autochthons and Allochthons during Political Liberalization in Cameroon', in M. de Bruijn, R. van Dijk and D. Foeken (eds.), *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 169–94.
32. P. Konings, *Labour Resistance in Cameroon* (London: James Currey, 1993).
33. M. Rowlands, 'Accumulation and the Cultural Politics of Identity in the Grassfields', in P. Geschiere and P. Konings (eds.), *Itinéraires d'Accumulation au Cameroun* (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 71–97.
34. V.J. Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800* (Limbe: Presbook, 1996).
35. See 'Significance of P.M. Musonge's Appointment' by a member of the South West elite, Kome Epule, in *The Star Headlines*, 20 November 1996, 5.
36. S. Melone, A. Minkoa She and L. Sindjoun (eds.), *La Réforme Constitutionnelle du 18 Janvier 1996 au Cameroun: Aspects Juridiques et Politiques* (Yaoundé: Foundation Friedrich Ebert, 1996); and P. Konings and F.B. Nyamnjoh, 'Construction and Deconstruction: Anglophones or Autochthons?', *The African Anthropologist*, 7/1 (2000), 5–32.
37. The term Sawa was generally employed by the 'native' Douala to refer to themselves as coastal people. The term was subsequently extended to related coastal people in the Franco-phone Littoral Province and Anglophone South West Province. Of late, ethnic groups in the Littoral and South West Provinces living at a distance from the coast have also come to identify themselves with this appellation. See E. Yenshu, 'The Discourse and Politics of Indigenous/Minority Peoples Rights in some Metropolitan Areas of Cameroon', *Journal of Applied Social Sciences*, 1/1 (1998), 59–76.

38. Yenshu, 'The Discourse and Politics of Indigenous/Minority Peoples Rights'; and F.B. Nyamnjoh and M. Rowlands, 'Elite Associations and the Politics of Belonging in Cameroon', *Africa*, 68/3 (1998), 320–37.
39. See Republic of Cameroon, *Cameroon Electoral Code, 1997 Revised Edition* (Yaoundé: Les Editions de l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1997).
40. Yenshu, 'The Discourse and Politics of Indigenous/Minority Peoples Rights'.
41. R.A. Joseph (ed.), *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadou Ahidjo* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978).
42. Fonchingong, 'Multipartyism and Democratization', 130.
43. *Ibid.*, 130–31.
44. *Ibid.*, 131–2.
45. For a detailed account of the tense relations between the Anglophone movements and the Commonwealth, see Konings and Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity*, 96–9.
46. For some reports on Commonwealth missions to Cameroon, see, for instance, *The Herald*, 28 August 2000, and 26 June 2003.
47. J.-F. Bayart, *L'Etat en Afrique: La Politique du Ventre* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).
48. Quoted in *The Post*, 5 June 2000, 1–3.
49. See *The Herald*, 26 July 2002; and *Le Messenger, World Edition*, 23 August 2002.
50. R.G. Dillon, 'Ideology, Process and Change in Pre-Colonial Meta' Political Organization (United Republic of Cameroon)', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania.
51. *The Post*, 20 July 2001, 3.
52. *Le Messenger, World Edition*, 29 August 2001.
53. *The Herald*, 12–19 October 2001.
54. *Ibid.*, 17 July 2002.
55. *Ibid.*, 26 July 2002.
56. *Ibid.*, 20 December 2002.
57. Cf. J.M. Mbaku, 'Cameroon's Stalled Transition to Democratic Governance: Lessons for Africa's New Democrats', *African and Asian Studies*, 1/3 (2002), 125–63; and J. Takougang, 'The 2002 Legislative Election in Cameroon: A Retrospective on Cameroon's Stalled Democracy Movement', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41/3 (2003), 421–35.
58. Konings, 'The Post-Colonial State and Economic and Political Reforms'.
59. F.B. Nyamnjoh, 'Cameroon: A Country United by Ethnic Ambition and Difference', *African Affairs*, 98/390 (1999), 101–18.
60. Van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and Clientelism'.
61. S.I. Lindberg, 'The Democratic Qualities of Competitive Elections: Participation, Competition and Legitimacy in Africa', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 42/1 (March 2004), 61–105.



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