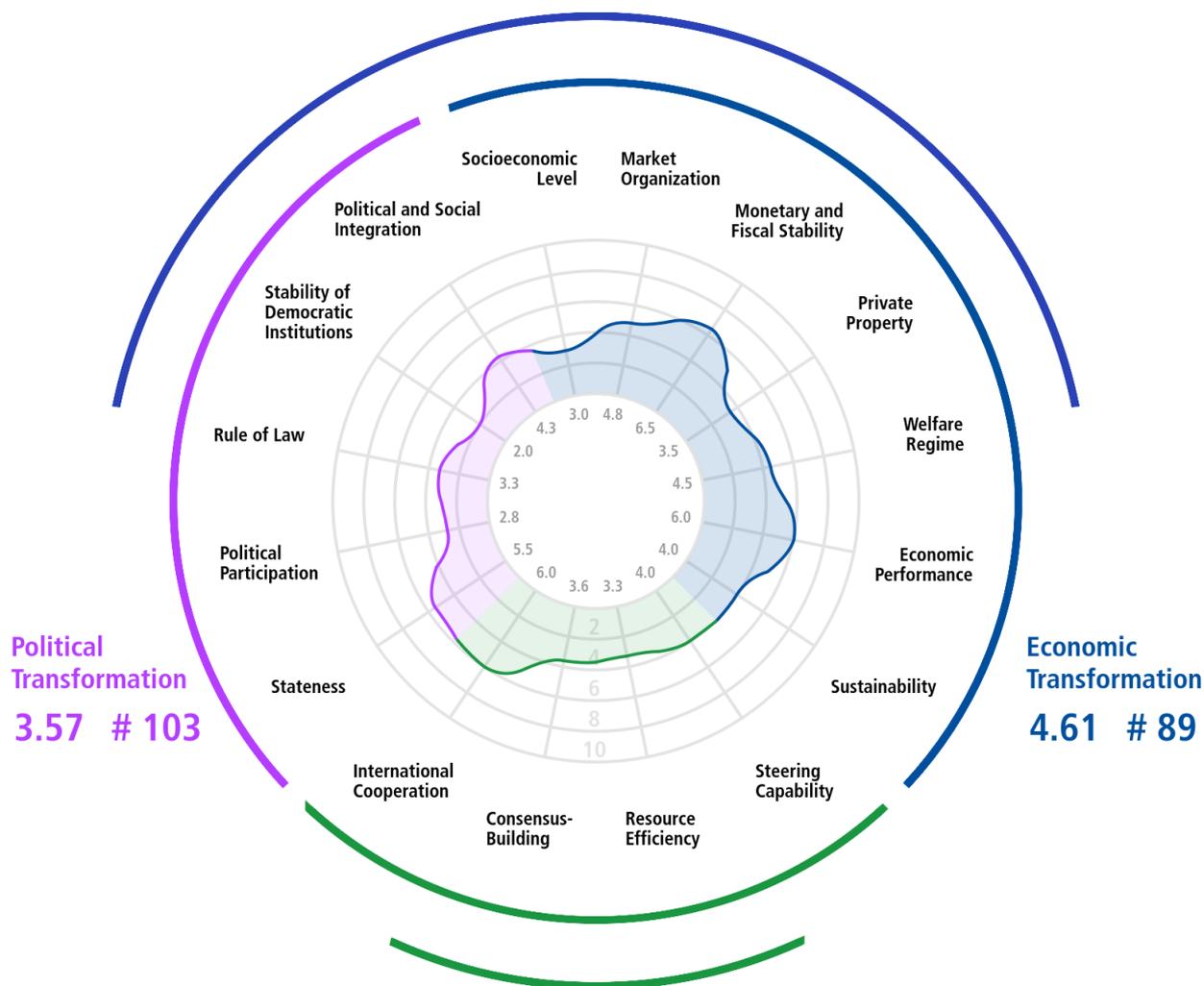


Cameroon

Status Index

4.09 # 103

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
3.57 # 103

Economic Transformation
4.61 # 89

Governance Index

3.93 # 97

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2024**. It covers the period from February 1, 2021 to January 31, 2023. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

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Contact

Bertelsmann Stiftung
Carl-Bertelsmann-Strasse 256
33111 Gütersloh
Germany

Sabine Donner

Phone +49 5241 81 81501
sabine.donner@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Hauke Hartmann

Phone +49 5241 81 81389
hauke.hartmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Sabine Steinkamp

Phone +49 5241 81 81507
sabine.steinkamp@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Key Indicators

Population	M	27.9	HDI	0.576	GDP p.c., PPP \$	4408
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	2.6	HDI rank of 189	151	Gini Index	46.6
Life expectancy	years	60.3	UN Education Index	0.569	Poverty ³	% 47.0
Urban population	%	58.7	Gender inequality ²	0.565	Aid per capita \$	41.4

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2021-22. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

Executive Summary

Cameroon initiated its economic transformation process in the late 1980s, which was followed by political changes introduced in the early 1990s. Under the presidency of Ahmadou Ahidjo, advancements were made in agriculture, education, health care, and transportation. However, Ahidjo's rule was characterized by repression in a highly centralized state, and he was perceived as showing preference toward his co-ethnics from northern Cameroon. The discovery of off-shore oil deposits in 1977 stimulated economic growth but also resulted in increased corruption and rent-seeking. The political transition from Ahidjo to Paul Biya was tumultuous, marked by an attempted coup in 1984 and an economic crisis. Despite Biya's pledges of a "New Deal" and structural reforms, he heavily relied on his southern co-ethnics, who occupied prominent positions in the military, government, ruling party, and economy. This further strengthened corruption and resistance to democratic and economic reforms, leading to a severe economic crisis in Cameroon by the late 1980s.

In 1989, Cameroon entered into a structural adjustment loan agreement with international lenders, which included components such as banking sector reform, privatization, trade liberalization, and budgetary constraints. However, the pace of reform was slow, and the World Bank labeled Cameroon one of the most disappointing adjusters. Reforms gained momentum after 2000, with the privatization of state-owned enterprises and increased competition in the banking and telecommunications sectors. Cameroon qualified for the IMF's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), which significantly reduced its debt burden. The country made progress in stabilizing macroeconomic indicators and well-being measures. Nevertheless, international lenders noted continued resistance to reform, due to poor governance and pervasive corruption. Cameroon increasingly relied on non-concessional lending to finance infrastructure projects, while investments in human development declined.

Cameroon's democratic transformation was also driven by the economic crisis of the 1980s. Similar to other African countries, civil society activism, mass protests, and international pressure

compelled the regime to allow multiparty elections. Numerous parties emerged, mostly based on ethnic or regional support. However, attempts to pressure the regime to initiate constitutional reform before the elections failed, and the 1992 parliamentary and presidential elections were heavily manipulated to secure a narrow victory for the regime. Since then, the regime has marginalized the opposition, leading to a state of “electoral authoritarianism.” While there have been slight improvements in political rights and civil liberties, Biya will not allow a peaceful transition of power. In 2006, the regime launched Operation Sparrowhawk, a large-scale anti-corruption campaign used to target its political opponents. In 2008, the National Assembly abolished presidential term limits, resulting in major protests and state violence. In 2014, a broad anti-terror law was passed, granting the regime extensive discretion in defining crimes against the state and enabling the use of military tribunals to prosecute opponents. In 2018, Paul Biya won another disputed election, extending his 35-year tenure in office.

Cameroon has also faced significant armed challenges to state authority. Since 2009, the jihadist group Boko Haram has operated along the Cameroon-Nigerian border in the Extreme North Region. Although the conflict has subsided from its peak in 2013/14, it has taken a significant toll. Since 2017, English-speaking regions have been embroiled in intense civil conflict driven by long-standing grievances concerning linguistic and cultural discrimination that emerged from the colonial period. The conflict escalated after peaceful civil society protests demanding redress were met with brutal state repression. Multiple armed groups are now fighting for what is known as “Ambazonian” independence. However, efforts at conflict resolution have been largely symbolic and have not led to substantial progress.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

Cameroon initiated its economic transformation process in the late 1980s, which were followed by political changes introduced in the early 1990s. Under the presidency of Ahmadou Ahidjo, advancements were made in agriculture, education, health care, and transportation. However, Ahidjo’s rule was characterized by repression in a highly centralized state, and he was perceived as showing preference toward his co-ethnics from northern Cameroon. The discovery of offshore oil deposits in 1977 stimulated economic growth but also resulted in increased corruption and rent-seeking. The political transition from Ahidjo to Paul Biya was tumultuous, marked by an attempted coup in 1984 and an economic crisis. Despite Biya’s pledges of a “New Deal” and structural reforms, he heavily relied on his southern co-ethnics, who occupied prominent positions in the military, government, ruling party, and economy. This further strengthened corruption and resistance to democratic and economic reforms, leading to a severe economic crisis in Cameroon by the late 1980s.

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The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

An ongoing secessionist movement in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon (Northwest and Southwest Regions) significantly challenges the state's monopoly on the use of force. In October 2017, the self-proclaimed Interim Government (IG) and the Ambazonian Governing Council (AGC) both claimed the region's independence from Cameroon. These groups operate or coordinate the activities of several local militias engaged in insurgent activities against the government. Militant groups also target civilians perceived as cooperative with the government or unwilling to support insurgent activities, such as economic and political boycotts. Civilians are also frequently kidnapped for ransom as a way for groups to raise funds. Government-organized vigilante groups also target civilians suspected of cooperating or sympathizing with Ambazonian militant groups. Despite a prolonged counterinsurgency effort marshaled by the Cameroonian government, the crisis has not abated, and there are no sincere attempts at a cease-fire or reconciliation. Since 2017, over 700,000 people have been displaced, 60,000 have become refugees, and nearly 1.5 million people need humanitarian aid. Over 4,000 people have been killed in the crisis.

The state's monopoly on the use of force is also challenged in the remote Extreme North Region. In recent years, the Islamist group Boko Haram has become increasingly active, partly because Cameroonian troops were redeployed in Anglophone regions. There are numerous self-defense vigilante groups with approximately 14,000 members who face criticism for their involvement in criminal activities such as cattle stealing, smuggling, and banditry. Similarly, the fallout from the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) affects Cameroon's eastern border. Armed groups participate in banditry and kidnapping, leading to frequent border shutdowns and limiting commerce. The proliferation of state-sponsored vigilante groups, especially in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, further indicates that the state's military forces struggle to maintain a monopoly on the use of force.

Question
Score

Monopoly on the
use of force

5



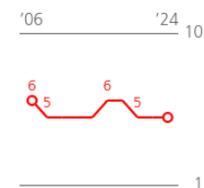
A large percentage of the population accepts that Cameroon is a legitimate nation-state, and there are very few issues with equal access to citizenship rights and related issues. However, historic tensions with English-speaking regions present a significant challenge to state identity. Anglophone identity is linked to Cameroon's unique bifurcated colonial heritage, which led to a federation between a larger French-speaking and a smaller English-speaking territory. A process of political centralization and the abandonment of federalism in 1972 have raised perceptions of cultural, economic, and political discrimination among Anglophones. In many circles, this was referred to as the "Anglophone problem." Until recently, most Anglophone demands have not extended beyond the notion of a unified Cameroon. Anglophone distinctiveness has become more marked since November 2016, when a protest movement to address historical grievances evolved into a prolonged secessionist movement. Segments of the English-speaking population support a return to federalism, but others support full independence of "Ambazonia," or the territories in northwest and southwest Cameroon.

The conflict with Boko Haram in northern Cameroon also has lingering effects on state identity. Recruitment of Cameroonian youth has often been forced or motivated by economic concerns. However, Boko Haram also deliberately targeted members of the Kanuri group, who have cross-border cultural and familial ties. More broadly, the historically limited authority of the central government in Cameroon's periphery regions raises concerns about state identity.

There is generally a separation of church and state, although this provision is not explicitly defined in the constitution. There is no official state religion in Cameroon, but the regime enjoys close ties with members of the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches, while many northern politicians have ties to Muslim religious leaders called Fons or Lamidos. These latter figures became key political allies when Biya came to power in 1982. Local religious leaders have at times been given considerable leeway to manage local affairs. Legal codes adopted from the colonial era explicitly recognize customary and Muslim law. Local courts (known as Alkali courts in Anglophone regions and Tribunaux de Premier Degré in Francophone regions) have at times overruled statutory law, especially regarding issues of inheritance, succession and personal law. It should also be noted that socially conservative values espoused by major religious organizations have likely influenced the government's attitude toward the LGBTQ+ community. Same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Cameroon and can result in a sentence of up to five years in prison.

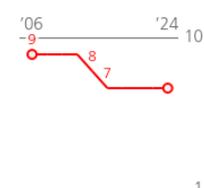
State identity

5



No interference of religious dogmas

7



Government agencies and administration are present in most parts of the country but are largely ineffective in terms of performance or the provision of public services. In 2020, only 44.6% of the population had access to sanitation, while less than two-thirds had access to drinking water (65.7%) and electricity (64.7%).

Cameroon is divided into 10 regions, each governed by a presidentially appointed governor and an indirectly elected council. In response to demands for greater autonomy, in 2019, the Anglophone regions were granted a special status that entailed creating regional assemblies with greater powers than the regional councils in Francophone regions have. However, the regional assemblies are still very weak and under the control of appointed regional governors. The regions are subdivided into 58 divisions or departments, which are headed by presidentially appointed divisional officers. Departments are divided into sub-divisions that correspond with 360 elected municipal councils and 14 unelected urban councils. Despite constitutional provisions, decentralization has only partially been implemented and has not translated into effective resource allocation (local councils do have the ability to levy local taxes and licensing fees). Consequently, access to public services remains limited, especially in rural areas where roughly half the population lives. Only half the country has access to improved sanitation facilities, and in rural areas, this rate is even lower at 20%. Roughly one-third of the country has no access to electricity or a safe water source.

All levels of government are eroded by corruption. It is common to find instances of petty corruption among the police, judiciary, and tax and customs officials. While several high-level government officials have been prosecuted for corruption, many have had charges dropped, and it is assumed that many elites in Cameroon are involved in large-scale corruption. The prosecution of high-level elites, which is referred to locally as Operation Sparrowhawk, is perceived as politically motivated against Biya's rivals.

2 | Political Participation

Multiparty elections and near-universal suffrage have been extended since 1992. However, there are persistent concerns about electoral integrity. While outright fraud has declined, opposition parties have rejected results and accused the election management body ELECAM of bias. The president appoints all members of ELECAM, and there are persistent issues with voter registration and election management. Elections have been postponed twice (2012 and 2018) for political purposes, and state-run media does not ensure equal access to all major candidates and parties. Incumbent President Paul Biya has been in power since 1982 and removed term limits in 2008. Both senatorial and regional council seats are filled via an indirect election by an electoral college of municipal councilors. This gives the regime a significant advantage. Moreover, 30% of Senate seats are appointed by the president, and 22% of regional councils are filled by state-recognized traditional chiefs.

Basic administration

5

'06 '24 10



1

Free and fair elections

3

'06 '24 10



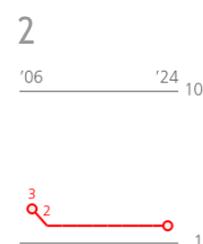
1

The Anglophone Crisis has further eroded faith in elections. In 2020, legislative and municipal elections were held amidst a tense security environment in English-speaking regions. The SDF and Cameroon Resistance Movement (MRC) boycotted the elections over concerns about the security environment and the impartiality of elections. Turnout in Anglophone regions was abysmally low, and candidates who participated in the election process were violently targeted by separatist groups. Similarly, the regional council elections of December 2020 were boycotted by the main opposition parties. Security and impartiality concerns also marred the 2023 senatorial election in which the ruling party won all 70 seats and the president appointed 30 other senators, including five from the opposition.

While Cameroon has a nominally democratically elected legislature, regional and local councils, political power is heavily concentrated within the office of the presidency. The constitution of Cameroon provides the president with extensive formal powers; including the ability to singlehandedly appoint ministers and senior civil servants. Presidentially appointed governors, district officers, and sub-district officers wield significant political power that can override elected officials. Similarly, government-recognized traditional authorities are also dependent on the presidency and can exert influence over elected officials. The president is also the commander-in-chief of all military units and appoints the bulk of the senior officer core. Presidential power is amplified through ambiguously defined emergency powers. The president can suspend the rule of law for renewable three-month terms. These powers were expanded in 2014 with the passage of an anti-terror bill that defined terrorism as any activity that threatened the functioning of the state and allowed for certain crimes to be prosecuted in a military tribunal.

The president of Cameroon wields additional power over elected officials through his control of the ruling party and his centrality in the Cameroonian political system. Since the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) dominates politics in Cameroon, it is the main avenue for most political ambition. As chairman of the party, the president essentially controls the political careers of the party and elected body members and can cultivate political loyalists. In addition, Paul Biya has been in power for over 35 years, and during that time he has created extensive patronage networks throughout the state apparatus and military. These patronage networks hold together a tenuous multiethnic coalition that generally benefits Biya's southern co-ethnics. The question of succession has loomed large in Cameroon for many years, and many elites believe that a challenge to Biya's authority would spell destabilization.

Effective power to govern



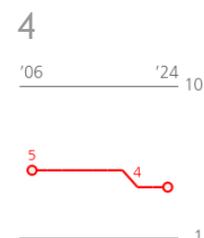
In principle, the constitution guarantees freedom of association and assembly, but in practice, these rights are significantly curtailed. Citizens can create associations and political parties. There are currently over 100 registered political parties and numerous civil society groups. However, in January 2017 the government used its authority under the 2014 anti-terror bill to ban two Anglophone advocacy groups: The Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) and the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC).

The U.S. Department of State reports that the authorities typically cited security and health-related concerns as the basis for deciding to block assemblies, while pro-government groups were generally authorized to organize public demonstrations. For instance, as the U.S. Department of State also reported, a government official in Douala banned a three-day seminar hosted by Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation in February 2021. The purpose of the seminar was to train members from opposition parties, the MRC and Social Democratic Front (SDF), in political communication.

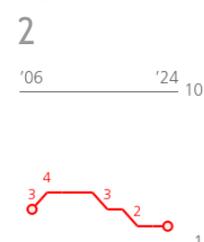
Generally, assembly rights are more often constrained than association rights. Throughout the Anglophone Crisis, the government has resorted to severe violence to counter peaceful demonstrations and used emergency declarations to impose curfews. In other parts of Cameroon, political opposition has been increasingly limited. In the past, the state apparatus would deny permits for assemblies for unspecified reasons. More recently, the state has suppressed activities under the guise of the 2014 anti-terror bill and the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, defeated presidential contender Maurice Kamto and 350 of his supporters in the MRC party were detained for nearly 10 months on charges of insurrection.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media. However, while Cameroon has a rich media landscape with over 500 outlets, freedom of expression is significantly restricted. State media is under strict government control and private media outlet representatives are often intimidated. Cameroon's media regulatory body, the National Communication Council (CNC) frequently bans newspapers and sanctions journalists for reporting on censored issues and spreading supposedly false information. Cameroon's libel laws are particularly lenient, which allows the government to prosecute reporters and media outlets for defamation and insulting the presidency. The 2014 anti-terror bill has considerably expanded the range of offenses that the government can censor media over. This power was used to limit reporting on government activities during the fight against Boko Haram in northern Cameroon and during the Anglophone Crisis. For instance, Cameroon Web journalist Paul Chouta has been assaulted several times, most recently in 2022, and was held in pre-trial detention for nearly two years on charges of defamation. In February 2023, journalist Martinez Zogo was brutally murdered by suspected state operatives, including the powerful counterintelligence boss, Léopold Maxime Eko Eko and businessman Jean-Pierre Amougou Belinga, who have been arrested. Freedom of expression has also been

Association / assembly rights



Freedom of expression



significantly curtailed, for instance, when the government regularly shut down internet services in Anglophone regions between January 2017 and March 2018. Internet service has remained spotty.

3 | Rule of Law

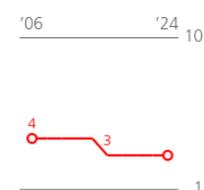
Given the formal powers provided to the presidency and the ruling party's decades-long domination of the country's institutions, neither the legislature nor judiciary can hold the executive accountable. The ruling party controls the overwhelming majority of seats in parliament (139 out of 180) and the Senate (95 out of 100) and controls the bulk of the local municipal councils (316 out of 360). Opposition figures do hold some leadership positions in the legislature, but their influence is limited and demands for investigative commissions are routinely blocked. Since the president can control the CPDM nomination process, this further guarantees a compliant legislature. The speaker of the National Assembly, regime loyalist Cavayé Djibril, has held the position since 1992. In the Senate, Marcel Niat Nijifendi has held the speakership since the creation of the institution in 2013. The president also essentially appoints the judiciary, since he chairs the consultative Higher Judicial Council of Cameroon. The Prime Minister's Office, which was created in 1992, is also appointed and its role is limited to government coordination.

Generally, human rights reports assess that the government does not always respect judicial independence and impartiality. The U.S. Department of State reports that, in some instances, the outcomes of trials appeared to be influenced by the government, especially in politically sensitive cases. Corrupt officials are only selectively prosecuted, although corruption or lack of professionalism on the part of judges is not specifically mentioned in human rights reports.

The judiciary in Cameroon is subordinate to the executive. While the constitution provides that judicial power is independent of legislative and executive power, the president is noted as the guarantor of the judiciary's independence. The president is responsible for appointments, promotions and disciplinary sanctions under with advisement of the Higher Judicial Council. However, the president chairs that council and appoints most of its members and, therefore, wields ultimate control over the careers of justices and magistrates. While justices enjoy tenure, the president can use disciplinary standards to transfer justices, suppress promotions, temporarily dismiss justices and force early retirement. In addition, the judiciary is highly dependent on the executive for its financing and the executive can use decrees to delay salaries and allowances. In 2018, a Constitutional Council was finally formed, as required by the 1996 constitution. This council took responsibility for constitutional law away from the Supreme Court and is responsible for adjudicating disputes during presidential elections. The president appoints the Constitutional Council's 11 members for

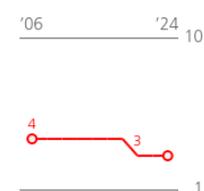
Separation of powers

3



Independent judiciary

3



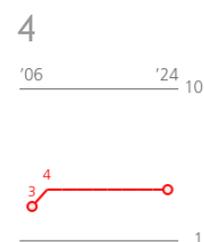
renewable six-year terms. Clément Atangana, perceived as a CPDM insider, was appointed as the council's president.

The independence of the judiciary is further undermined by the creation of special tribunal and court systems for the prosecution of financial crimes and terrorism. In 2011, a Special Criminal Court was created to deal with cases of public financial misappropriation. However, many view this court as a way for the ruling regime to punish political detractors and opponents. The 2014 anti-terror bill defines terrorism broadly to include any activity that threatens the territorial integrity of the nation and allows the government to fast-track prosecutions through a military tribunal rather than through the normal judicial system. Opponents of the bill note that these new powers have been used to stifle political dissent and freedom of expression, in particular over the government's activities in northern Cameroon to combat Boko Haram and in Anglophone regions.

Public corruption is pervasive, and prosecutions against offenders are selective and typically politically motivated. Cameroon has had several institutions ostensibly created to fight corruption. In 2000 the National Anti-Corruption Observatory was founded but lacked a sustained financial basis or any independence from the executive. In 2006 the National-Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) replaced this institution, and in 2011 the Special Criminal Court was created to prosecute state officials involved in particularly egregious corruption scandals. In 2006 a coordinated anti-corruption effort known as "Operation Sparrowhawk" was launched and continues to operate to this day. Consequently, there have been several high-profile prosecutions of public officials including ministers, a former prime minister, and several managers of state-owned corporations.

However, observers note that these anti-corruption drives are slow-moving, half-hearted and used to silence critics. For instance, in 2012 former Minister of Health Urbain Awono was sentenced to 20 years in prison for embezzlement in relation to a fake contract to deliver mosquito nets to hospitals. But Awono was arrested in 2008 following his criticism of the abolishment of presidential term limits. In 2012, Minister of Interior Marafa Hamidou Yaya was arrested and sentenced to 25 years in jail for his involvement in a scandal relating to the purchase of a new presidential jet (the Albatross Affair). The following year, former Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni was sentenced to 20 years in prison for embezzlement. Both Yaya and Inoni were seen as potential challengers to President Paul Biya. Despite these prosecutions, many other trials have stalled. For instance, the U.S. Department of State reported slow progress in the judicial proceedings that President Biya ordered in 2021 to investigate COVID-19 spending. This investigation, popularly known as "Covidgate," revealed failings such as opacity in the awarding of contracts, overrunning allocated budgets, embezzlement and overbilling. In October 2022, an arrest warrant was issued for Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, the secretary-general of the presidency, without any further developments before the end of the reporting period.

Prosecution of
office abuse



Civil liberties are supposed to be guaranteed by constitutional procedures or the legal system. However, according to an assessment by the U.S. State Department, both options involve lengthy delays and there are problems enforcing civil court orders due to bureaucratic inefficiency and pervasive corruption. Many civil rights are frequently violated, especially those of political opponents. As in previous years, supporters of the Anglophone secessionist movement are increasingly targeted. Likewise, the government has declared states of emergency and imposed curfews in Anglophone areas and parts of northern Cameroon. It is common for the government to arbitrarily detain hundreds of people and hold them in administrative detentions for long periods. Prison conditions are notoriously horrible with overcrowding, subpar sanitation, food shortages, and systematic torture and rape. Moreover, the increased use of military tribunals under the guise of the 2014 anti-terror law has severely restricted civil rights.

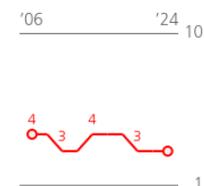
There is also evidence of significant discrimination and unequal access to justice. Since 2011, the LGBTQ+ community has faced a series of trials because homosexuality is criminalized in Cameroon. Human Rights Watch has noted that Cameroon prosecutes homosexuality more aggressively than any country in the world. In 2021, it issued a report noting a significant increase in the arrest and abuse of LGBTQ+ people. Women also suffer from judicial and de facto discrimination in terms of inheritance, employment and property rights. Domestic violence is believed to be widespread, and female genital mutilation impacts approximately 1% of women. In northern Cameroon, the government continues to monitor Muslim places of worship and has banned full-face veils in the past.

4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

Cameroon is an autocracy with a façade of democratic republican institutions that have not developed a life of their own. The National Assembly and the Senate cannot be considered democratic institutions. Rather, these institutions are arenas where the regime can placate the ambitions of elites through patronage and corruption. Deficiencies in terms of democracy and rule of law are deep-rooted and are an inherent element of the political architecture on which Paul Biya's rule rests. This bleak reality is mirrored in popular attitudes that reflect increasing disappointment in democracy in Cameroon. According to the 2022 Afrobarometer surveys, over 17% of Cameroonians believe that Cameroon is non-democratic and an additional 42% that Cameroon is a democracy with major problems. The escalation of the crisis in Anglophone regions into a full-blown secessionist insurgency is another indicator of the failure of democratic politics in Cameroon.

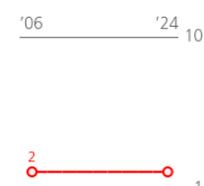
Civil rights

3



Performance of democratic institutions

2



Cameroon is a strongly personalized electoral autocracy, with little commitment to democratic institutions. The president’s centralization of power means that he can manipulate institutions to position supporters and punish detractors. The president weakens democratic institutions by holding cabinet meetings only at random. The ruling party, the CPDM does not convene regular party congresses, as the party’s chairman, President Biya, decides even these. There is no apparent institutional mechanism within the ruling party for choosing a successor, and a succession crisis is likely at some point in the future that could further destabilize democratic institutions.

Opposition parties and civil society organizations have historically participated in democratic politics but have also frequently boycotted elections or refused to participate in the National Assembly. The Anglophone conflict has further reduced some political actors’ commitment to democratic institutions in Cameroon, as is evident in the boycott of the 2020 elections and the recently concluded Senate elections in which the ruling party won all 70 seats.

5 | Political and Social Integration

Cameroon’s party system is characterized by a dominant or hegemonic ruling party, which is surrounded by a fragmented array of opposition parties. Outside of the ruling party, political parties are institutionally weak and have limited social roots. Five parties have consistently won some representation in the National Assembly – the SDF, NUDP, UPC, UDC, and MDR. Of these, only the SDF has been consistently oppositional, but currently only holds five legislative seats. Each party is rooted in specific regions or is strongly ethnic. Since 2018, new parties have emerged, such as the Front for the National Salvation of Cameroon and the Cameroonian Party for National Reconciliation, but they have only won a few seats. Other parties like the MRC and Unifers have presented somewhat popular presidential candidates but hold no legislative seats. Cameroon also has over 300 “mushroom parties” that contend in elections with no intention of winning seats.

The ruling party claims to have physical organization throughout the country that reaches down to the village level. However, in reality, the party’s administration only emerges during elections. It has much stronger support in central and southern regions, among the president’s co-ethnics, than elsewhere. While it makes appeals to political stability in campaigning, the ruling party engages in extensive clientelism and outright vote-buying to mobilize support.

Commitment to democratic institutions

2

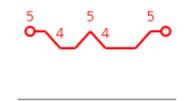
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Party system

5

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A number of societal interests are represented in Cameroon, but many are under-represented and those interests that are organized often suffer from weak membership and government intervention in their affairs. Formal workers can form trade unions, and the Confederation of Cameroon Trade Unions (CCTU) coordinates most union activity. However, membership remains low (~200,000) and most workers in Cameroon are in the under-represented informal sector. Moreover, the CCTU is heavily monitored, and the government has also encouraged the creation of rival organizations. During the period under review, the U.S. State Department reported that several strikes were announced. Some were called off after successful negotiations, others were carried out peacefully, and still others faced some degree of repression. Agricultural interests are organized into a number of cooperatives, but these are much stronger in West and Northwest Regions. The business community is organized into an employer's association (GICAM), but its leadership has strong ties with the ruling party. Cameroon also has various elite associations based on villages and ethnic groups, which are often penetrated or co-opted by the ruling party. Women are relatively under-represented in Cameroon's interest groups. Likewise, there is no real advocacy network for civic education, governance, or democracy.

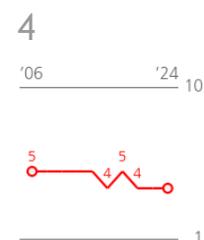
Since 2016, interest groups in Anglophone areas have come under intense repression. In January 2017, the government banned the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), which advocated for the self-determination of Anglophones. The government also banned the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC), which was an umbrella organization that brought together local legal groups, teacher unions, and student organizations to advocate for a redress of cultural and economic grievances.

In 2021, the U.S. State Department, citing the International Labor Organization (ILO), noted that the legal definition of terrorism in Cameroon could apply to acts related to the legitimate exercise of activities by trade unions or employers' representatives.

While Cameroon currently qualifies as an authoritarian system, Cameroonians are generally in favor of a democratic system. Even so, the recent trend has been negative. According to Afrobarometer 2022, nearly two-thirds of Cameroonians are not satisfied with the state of their democracy, but only 55% consider democracy preferable to other forms of government. This represents a decline from a rate of 62% in 2017/18 and 67% in 2014/15. These trends are strong among the Anglophone population.

Elections in Cameroon are generally nonviolent. While losers may reject the results of an election, they have not organized violence in opposition. However, the current secessionist movement in Anglophone areas reflects a rejection of the state of democracy in Cameroon, as well as of the notion that the conflict can be resolved through democratic means.

Interest groups



Approval of democracy



Social capital in Cameroon is primarily bonding rather than bridging. Intercommunal trust is weak, as evident in the prevalence of ethnic associations and the importance of kinship in accessing the state's hierarchy. These patterns often extend from rural to urban areas, where it is common to find village associations that cater to communal life. Likewise, perceptions of ethnic bias in the distribution of resources and accusations of under- or over-representation of certain groups in state structures and prestigious institutions permeate political discourse. Government narratives of national unity mask a strategy of ethnic balancing and divide-and-rule tactics that reinforce primary identities. These tendencies are exacerbated by persistent economic insecurity, which leads ordinary citizens to seek recourse through their primary identity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government encouraged citizens to contribute to a Health Solidarity Fund. The fund generated over \$40 million in contributions (primarily from politicians and corporate entities), much of which was apparently embezzled.

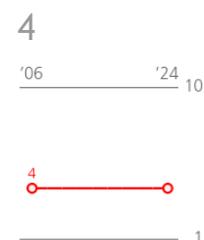
The Francophone-Anglophone division is currently the most significant barrier to social capital, and the crisis has significantly exacerbated this tendency. Trust between French-speaking and English-speaking Cameroonians was already likely low before the conflict. But the spread of violence has had a twofold effect. First, it has widened the chasm between the two communities and allowed the government to portray Anglophones as terrorists who threaten to destabilize the country. Second, violence has also frayed bonds within the Anglophone community, as citizens have not been spared violence from separatists. There is frequent reporting of attacks against accused informants and regime collaborators (referred to as “black legs”). A similar dynamic eroded social capital in northern Cameroon at the peak of the war against Boko Haram.

II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

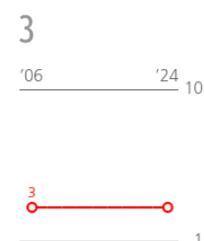
Cameroon's economic structure and performance do not meet the criteria for a socially responsible market democracy. Despite making significant improvements in poverty alleviation and human development since the 1990s, Cameroon still ranks low and improvement has stalled. Only one of the Millennium Development Goals – net school enrollment – has been met, and many have deteriorated since the start of the Anglophone Crisis. Although the situation had greatly improved by 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a lingering impact on small and medium-sized businesses, with female-led microenterprises being particularly affected.

Social capital



Question Score

Socioeconomic barriers



With a per capita GDP of \$1,666 in 2021, Cameroon is a lower middle-income country. Cameroon's calculated HDI value of 0.576 now places it at the very low end of the "medium human development" spectrum, and the country is ranked 151 out of 189. Life expectancy is 61 years, and 47% of the population lives on less than \$3.65 a day. This reflects only a slight improvement from levels in 2010. Likewise, there have been mixed improvements in other development indicators. Between 2020 and 2022, infant mortality remained high, at 55 per 1,000 births.

In addition, socioeconomic development is strongly influenced by persistent inequalities. More than 40% of the population resides in rural areas, with poverty highly concentrated in the rural Extreme North and East Regions. Moreover, approximately 33% of the urban population resides in slums with inadequate sanitation conditions. When accounting for inequality, Cameroon's HDI value drops to 0.318, which is significantly below the average for Medium HDI countries (0.483). The most recent available data on the Gini coefficient dates back to 2014 and indicates a high level of income equality (46.6). Gender inequality is also a concern, particularly evident in disparities in education acquisition and labor force participation. Currently, Cameroon's Gender Inequality Index stands at 0.56, slightly above the average for Medium HDI countries (0.489).

Economic indicators		2019	2020	2021	2022
GDP	\$ M	39671.0	40773.2	45338.3	44341.6
GDP growth	%	3.5	0.3	3.6	3.5
Inflation (CPI)	%	2.5	2.4	2.3	6.2
Unemployment	%	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.0
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	2.6	1.7	2.1	2.0
Export growth	%	11.2	-14.4	3.4	3.0
Import growth	%	11.4	-17.1	13.8	-3.7
Current account balance	\$ M	-1695.1	-1512.4	-1795.0	-
Public debt	% of GDP	41.6	44.9	46.8	45.5
External debt	\$ M	12872.3	14783.9	16003.3	-
Total debt service	\$ M	1137.3	1202.6	1318.0	-

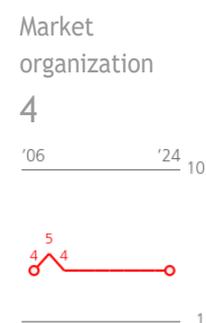
Economic indicators		2019	2020	2021	2022
Government consumption	% of GDP	12.1	12.3	12.0	11.6
Public education spending	% of GDP	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.6
Public health spending	% of GDP	0.4	0.6	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	-	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.9

Sources (as of December 2023): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

Market-based competition is structured by several legal frameworks to streamline the ease of doing business, but there are still significant hindrances to a free market environment. Cameroon is a party to the Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC) framework. Cameroon is also a member of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), a set of laws and regulations that aim to streamline business regulations in 17 African countries. Cameroon's banking is controlled by the Bank of Central African States (BEAC), and it is a foundational member of the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI). This regional integration creates a degree of competitive market organization, particularly concerning access to foreign exchange, the licensing of credit bureaus and dispute resolution.

Nonetheless, the conditions for a free market are not fulfilled. Nearly 90% of the population is employed in the informal sector (the latest available figure from 2014 is 87.1%), and state intervention, corruption and poorly functioning public institutions persistently hinder economic progress. The state exercises price and import controls on certain goods, including primary foodstuffs and petrol. In addition, there are over 130 state-owned enterprises that dominate specific sectors of the economy. Cameroon is widely recognized for its unfavorable business conditions, with deficiencies in property registration, procurement and issuance of import permits. Despite its membership in OAPI, intellectual property rights are also weakly enforced. These restrictions have limited the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to enter the market and hindered the growth of foreign investment.



The National Competition Commission (NCC) at the Ministry of Commerce is the national authority the mandate of which is to enforce competition rules. However, competition in many sectors is restricted, partly due to the widespread presence of over 130 state-owned companies and a single marketing board for agricultural exports. For instance, Cameroon Telecommunications (CAMTEL) controls the national telephone and internet infrastructure and has expanded into the retail mobile sector. There is also a national refinery (SONARA), sugar company (CAMSUCO), palm oil company (SOCAPALM), cotton company (SODECOTON) and brewery (Brasseries du Cameroun). According to the IMF, weak corporate governance has resulted in declining profitability and significant public debt that burdens the government budget. Additionally, the government has faced criticism for favoring French companies such as Total in the oil sector, Lafarge in the building material sector, and Société Générale in investment banking. The NCC has never prosecuted a case involving competition infringement.

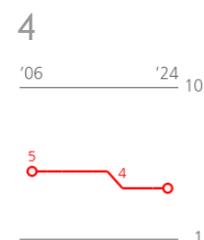
Cameroon is not a member of the International Competition Network.

Cameroon adheres to the multilateral trade system, specifically the agreements of the WTO and the World Customs Office (WCO), as well as common trade rules set out by CEMAC. Additionally, Cameroon has signed several limited bilateral trade agreements and maintains a few Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs) where certain trade barriers are reduced. Cameroon's membership in the Commonwealth and CFA franc zone is also intended to facilitate trade.

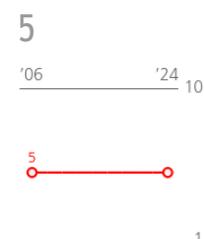
In 2016, the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union took effect, granting Cameroon duty-free exports of most goods to Europe in exchange for a reduction in tariffs on EU imports. Furthermore, Cameroon ratified the 2020 African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTFA), although its implementation is pending. Conversely, in 2020, Cameroon lost its eligibility for preferential trade under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, due to human rights violations.

Despite these structures, there are several formal and informal barriers to free trade. Complex and inefficient bureaucracies, particularly at Douala's port, result in long delays and high costs. Cameroon adheres to CEMAC's common external tariff, which establishes four tariff rates ranging from 10% on raw materials to 30% on certain consumer goods. However, this does not account for additional expenses incurred as a result of lengthy and sometimes expensive permit and registration processes. Certain products (such as specific textiles, meat, imported sugar alcohol and nicotine products) face issues with customs valuation practices, which do not always consider the transaction value but instead rely on a reference price set by the government. While there are no export subsidies or import quotas in place, the government enforces grade certifications for the export of coffee, cocoa, gold and diamonds. Additionally, the government prohibits the export of certain types of forestry products as a means of environmental conservation.

Competition policy



Liberalization of foreign trade



Cameroon has 15 commercial banks and over 400 microfinance institutions. The Central African Banking Commission (COBAC) regulates the banking sector, and the regional Bank of Central African States (BEAC) acts as its central bank. However, banking services are not readily available outside of major urban areas, and fewer than 20% of Cameroonians have access to a formal banking service. Microfinance institutions and mobile money are available to most Cameroonians but may have become restricted by the introduction of a tax on electronic payment transfers in 2022. Similarly, the domestic banking sector is overshadowed by international commercial banks.

While Cameroon has a large banking system, it remains fragile. The four largest banks account for 59% of total bank assets, with Yaoundé and Douala generating about 90% of all bank credits and deposits. Despite past improvements, between 2020 and 2022, the proportion of non-performing loans rose to nearly 15%, while bank profitability declined. Bank liquidity is predicted to worsen as well, as forbearance measures expire.

8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

Monetary policy is managed by the regional central bank, the BEAC, which holds currency reserves, seeks to limit inflation by setting policy rates, and regulates foreign currency exchange. Cameroon's inclusion in the CFA franc zone also means it has a relatively stable currency. In 2022, a regulation that restricted payments in foreign currency by individuals and businesses was extended to the oil sector. Following an agreement in 2018, the government has stepped up efforts to increase the repatriation of foreign exchanges and stabilize the BEAC's reserves. Likewise, Cameroon began to share mining and oil contracts with the BEAC. Cameroon was also resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic, with consumer price inflation remaining constant through mid-2022 at around 2.4%. Similarly, the real effective exchange rate index is 100, reflecting a rather healthy foreign exchange situation. However, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is expected to create additional inflationary pressure.

Cameroon has made gradual but imperfect improvements to its fiscal policy, raising concerns about longer-term fiscal stability. In 2021, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a three-year, \$689.5 million Extended Credit Facility for Cameroon. The approval required the country to accelerate reforms, improving fiscal management and diversifying the economy. However, by 2022, assessments of these reforms were mixed. Cameroon's fiscal position was bolstered by higher oil revenues and reduced COVID-19 spending, resulting in a decrease in the deficit between 2021 and 2022. Nevertheless, structural reforms progressed slowly, and considerable downside risks remained apparent.

Several ongoing concerns persist. As of 2022, Cameroon has accumulated debt at a rapid pace, reaching 47.2% of its GDP. The majority of this debt is external, with China being the primary lender. State-owned enterprises lack transparency and

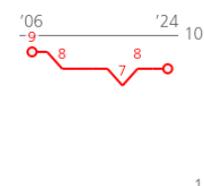
Banking system

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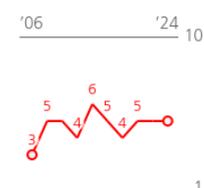
Monetary stability

8



Fiscal stability

5



currently hold an undisclosed amount of debt, estimated to be around 12.5% of GDP. Projects funded by debt often proceed without the approval of the National Public Debt Commission and there is inadequate tracking of loans. In 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) classified Cameroon's risk of debt distress as high. Additionally, rising oil prices have resulted in increased spending on fuel subsidies, while global inflationary pressures have created demands for higher spending and wages. Furthermore, government revenue predominantly relies on the oil sector, with very few non-oil-related sectors contributing.

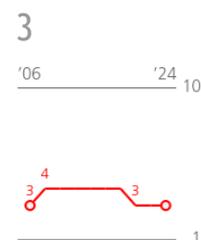
The most recent data on the account balance show a slight decrease (-\$1,512.4 million) in 2020, following an increase from -\$949.8 million in 2017 to -\$1,409.3 million in 2019.

9 | Private Property

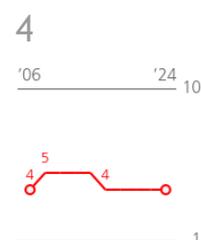
Property rights are recognized in Cameroonian law, including the rights of tribes and farmers. In principle, liens must be recorded in contracts and there is a registry of land titles. However, land registration rates in Cameroon are extremely low. Fewer than 1,000 titles are issued each year. Property registration can be lengthy and costly. Only 2% of Cameroonian land is registered, mainly in urban areas. In rural areas, land is primarily subjected to specific land tenure regimes, leading to conflicts over informal land sales and illegal occupation. The state also has the unique authority to override property rights. Emergency measures during the Anglophone conflict have allowed the government to indiscriminately confiscate land. Similarly, the Cameroonian government can easily expropriate land for public interest purposes, such as the construction of major infrastructure projects. While there is a compensation system in place, it is weakly enforced. Finally, the protection of intellectual property is weak. Cameroon hosts the African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI), but there are very few legal structures or enforcement mechanisms. Infringement on intellectual property in media, pharmaceuticals, software and print is common, while intellectual property rights have deteriorated due to an influx of Chinese and Indian counterfeit goods.

While the 2020 National Development Strategy recognizes the role of the private sector in economic growth, there are real constraints on private enterprise. Cameroon's economy is dominated by a considerable state-owned sector and centralized political control, which limits private entry into the marketplace. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), a parastatal, is the country's second-largest employer after the state. The government also favors public-private partnerships, particularly with large private firms that are either foreign or politically connected. The IMF has asked the government to accelerate reforms to support private-sector-led economic diversification and expressed general satisfaction with the progress made in December 2021.

Property rights



Private enterprise



There is limited room for small to medium-sized firms. Nascent firms in sectors like technology have been hindered by the Anglophone Crisis. The business association, Groupement Inter Patronal du Cameroun (GICAM), regularly urges the government to streamline business registration procedures.

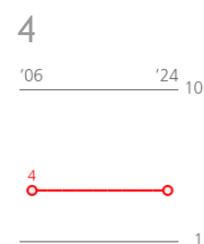
10 | Welfare Regime

State measures to alleviate social risks are limited. The public social insurance system (Caisse nationale de prévoyance sociale, CNPS) only covers the small formal sector and is overextended and poorly managed. Since 2014, people working in the informal sector have contributed voluntarily. In 2016, the government raised the contribution rate from 2.8% to 4.2%, while increasing the size of pensions. In 2018, the CNPS began to experiment with mobile payments of benefits.

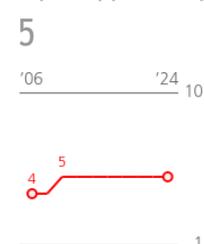
Cameroon spends less than 5% of its GDP on the health care system and requires the payment of user fees at the point of service. Accessing health services, especially without insurance, is prohibitive to most. Most Cameroonians rely on informal mechanisms of social security, such as family structures, solidarity networks and religious institutions. An informal system of community savings known as “tontines” is also common. Efforts to expand formal social safety nets remain limited. The 2017 National Social Protection Policy calls for the extension of universal health coverage, but it is not clear how that should be accomplished. Likewise, there is currently no non-contributory welfare program, such as cash transfers.

Equal opportunity is partially achieved. Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and political preference exists. Cameroon has ratified several international conventions and accords to eliminate discrimination against women. In practice, women continue to encounter barriers to economic, cultural, educational and policy participation. Women hold 25% of Senate and 34% of National Assembly seats, largely due to gender quotas. Only 10% of municipal councils are led by women and 11 of 63 ministers are women. The disadvantages women face are reflected in their lower literacy, educational enrollment and labor participation rates when compared to men. While Cameroon’s labor force was 46.8% female in 2021, men still tended to occupy higher positions. Many social practices limit equal opportunity for women. According to the U.N., more than one-third of women report suffering from domestic abuse and half report experiencing physical violence at least once in their lifetimes. One-third report being forced into a child marriage and 1% report undergoing genital mutilation. Discrimination based on ethnicity and political preference is very apparent. Membership in the CPDM is an informal prerequisite for accessing higher education, business loans and government service. There is a widespread perception that ethnic quotas are used to make decisions regarding access. Anglophones, in particular, report ongoing discrimination dating back to the abolishment of federalism in 1972, exacerbated by the ongoing Anglophone conflict.

Social safety nets



Equal opportunity



There is also discrimination against specific minority groups. According to the U.S. State Department, the Baka people, derogatorily known as pygmies, often face discrimination and lack representation in higher government offices. Other forms of discrimination are also widespread. Similar to other African nations, social stigma arises from Albinism and HIV+ status. Cameroon lacks protection for LGBTQ+ rights and members of that community endure severe discrimination. Same-sex sexual activities are illegal. There are instances each year of imprisonment, harassment and public exposure for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

11 | Economic Performance

Cameroon is CEMAC's largest and most diversified economy, but several challenges restrict its potential for growth. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, real GDP per capita did not increase between 2020 and 2022. In 2021, real per capita growth was 0.9%. However, growth per capita decreased by -2.0 in 2020. In 2021, GDP per capita in PPP was \$4,064.

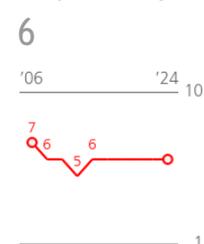
While increased oil revenues have improved Cameroon's fiscal position, ongoing concerns with debt, governance and state involvement in the economy limit economic output. Cameroon's growth is sustained by debt-funded government investments in infrastructure and public works, a limited number of sectors primarily dependent on world prices for raw materials and a small formal sector. Some economic sectors continue to suffer from the Anglophone Crisis, primarily the palm oil and banana industries. Foreign investment was only 1.7% of GDP in 2021, compared to 2.6% the year before.

Inflation is less of a problem. In 2021 and 2020, it was 2.3% and 2.4%, respectively. Official unemployment rates seem low (3.9% and 3.8%), but are of little significance, given the large informal sector. Debt remains a problem, with public debt accounting for 45.5% and 44.9% of total debt in 2021 and 2020, respectively.

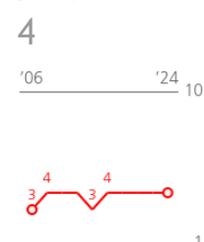
12 | Sustainability

There are insufficient environmental initiatives or regulations and enforcement is deficient. Cameroon relies heavily on fossil fuels for energy production, and there have been severe issues with land, water and air pollution. Increased investments in palm oil, mineral extraction and road development have led to higher rates of deforestation over the past decade (~1% annually, the second highest in the Congo Basin). There is little regulation of the use of pesticides. Poor waste management systems have resulted in the discharge of large amounts of refuse directly into the environment. Similarly, industrial waste and poor management of wastewater (less than 1% of sewage water is treated) have degraded water sources and supplies. Sustainable exploitation of marine life resources, particularly fisheries, remains hugely problematic with increased rates of illegal fishing. The European Union recently issued Cameroon a "yellow card" due to overfishing and its failure to

Output strength



Environmental policy

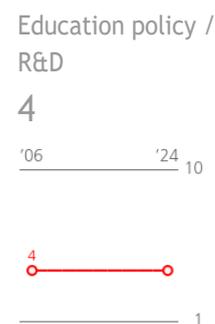


cooperate in combating the problem. The government has little money to even measure air pollutants, but rates are likely rising rapidly in major cities due to urbanization. Cameroon is also highly susceptible to climate change, which has begun to cause desertification in northern regions. Cameroon currently ranks 153 on Yale's Environmental Performance Index.

The current legal and regulatory environment is inadequate for these challenges. Cameroon is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and participates in other regional and global environmental efforts, including the 2015 Paris Accords. Cameroon has a National Climate Change Observatory (ONACC), but this has not resulted in any policy changes. The Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINIPED) has piloted reforestation programs, but there is no new legislation on the horizon. Likewise, MINIPED was consulted during the development of the 2020 National Development Strategy, but no concrete policies have yet to emerge as a result.

Cameroon has made progress in education policy, most notably with its increased literacy rate and near 100% enrollment in primary school education (primary school fees were abolished in 2000), although secondary rates have decreased to just 40%. Public expenditure on education has been relatively constant over the past 10 years (averaging 3% of GDP). Cameroon's United Nations Education Index has likewise been approximately 0.5 for the past decade. Little data exists for expenditures on research and development.

Despite this progress, there are serious issues with the educational system. There are regional disparities in levels of access, and enrollments are far lower in the North and the Extreme North Regions. Levels of income and gender also lead to unequal levels of access to educational opportunities. Absenteeism of teachers and corruption in the Ministry of Education and school education have impacted the quality of education. Tertiary education has received far less investment than primary and secondary education. Anglophones have long complained about inequality in access to education due to language requirements. Anglophone separatists have also deliberately targeted the educational sector. Despite efforts by the government in 2022 to reopen some 200 schools in Anglophone regions, many remain closed.



Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

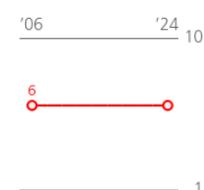
Structural constraints on governance capacity are moderate, particularly in comparison with neighboring landlocked countries. Several features typical of African economies are present: legacies of colonialism that have left strong social divisions and weak state capacity, strong reliance on natural resources as a source of exports and government revenue, reduction in human capital due to exposure to tropical diseases like malaria, high levels of rural poverty, weak infrastructure, desertification and exposure to climate change. Still, Cameroon has one of the more diversified economies in West Africa and many advantageous features: a relatively large and educated workforce, a vast endowment of natural resources, favorable climatic conditions, access to the sea and a strategic location straddling Central and West Africa. Moreover, Cameroon was able to weather the COVID-19 pandemic. Without downplaying structural conditions, obstacles to political and economic transformation are due to government policies rather than structural factors.

There are a number of social society traditions in Cameroon, but decades of authoritarian rule have limited civil society development. A large proportion of early civic organizations were permeated by the ruling party and co-opted. While civil society played an important role in the transition to multipartyism in the early 1990s – particularly Anglophone organizations – it has since undergone a process of fragmentation and political demobilization. Many of the civil society groups that have appeared recently are explicitly ethnic or used as vehicles for securing government patronage. Participation is limited to towns and cities, with many organizations lacking basic offices. Approximately 50% of the population lives in rural areas where they are integrated into local civil society traditions, but not part of national movements. There has been a steady decrease in electoral participation. The Anglophone Crisis has exacerbated this situation and created severe issues in the realm of social trust. Much of the civil society movement in the Anglophone regions has been banned and the conflict has exacerbated the perception among some Francophones that the Anglophones want to destabilize the country.

As noted above, social trust is limited. Intercommunal trust is weak, as evident in the prevalence of ethnic associations and the importance of kinship in accessing the state's hierarchy. These patterns often extend from rural to urban areas, in the latter of which it is common to find village associations that cater to communal life.

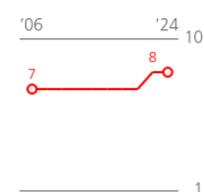
Structural
constraints

6



Civil society
traditions

8



For the past decade, Cameroon has been faced with serious social and religious conflicts. The Anglophone Crisis has taken a heavy humanitarian and economic toll. Over 4,000 people have been killed, 700,000 internally displaced, and 60,000 made refugees. Government forces have come under heavy criticism for their indiscriminate use of violence, including the destruction of entire villages and the use of rape and torture. Insurgent groups have also increasingly used violence against civilians, either to extract money, to punish perceived collaborators or to impose economic boycotts. The Anglophone Crisis has also likely made the conflict with Boko Haram in the Extreme North Region much worse. Since 2021, there has been an escalation in Boko Haram activity, in part due to the redeployment of security forces to Anglophone areas. This conflict has also taken a heavy humanitarian toll, with evidence of severe human rights violations.

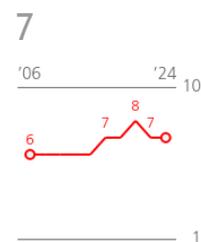
The potential for other forms of violence is real. Ethnic, regional, and religious identities are reinforced and often suggested in private and public discourse to evoke alleged marginalization or favoritism. The practice of scapegoating certain groups to mobilize support or secure legitimacy for would-be-leaders is common. Some groups are persistently framed in confrontational terms. For instance, the West Cameroonian Bamileke are widely believed to monopolize economic power and are accused of being overly ambitious. Other groups like the Beti (Paul Biya's co-ethnics) are perceived as entrenched in the upper echelons of power and unwilling to cede that power. A presidential succession would have the potential to unleash many of these tensions because different ethnic groups would compete for political power.

II. Governance Performance

14 | Steering Capability

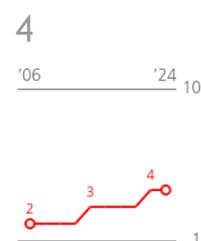
The government has established strategic priorities, notably through initiatives such as the Cameroon Vision 2035 program, the National Development Strategy (NDS30, 2020 – 2030), and its commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the government's own statement, the "NDS30 aims to bring about a structural transformation of the economy by making fundamental changes in economic and social structures, promoting inclusive development from within, and preserving opportunities for future generations. The ultimate goal is to elevate the country to the status of a New Industrialized Country." The government has prepared a comprehensive 207-page document that focuses on the following four pillars: (1) structural transformation of the national economy; (2) development of human capital and well-being; (3) promotion of employment and economic integration; (4) governance, decentralization and strategic management of the state.

Conflict intensity



Question Score

Prioritization



While NDS30 indicates some level of priority setting, it appears highly ambitious and its implementation relies heavily on external actors. The political leadership's focus seems more concerned with maintaining Paul Biya as president than with achieving the stated objectives. Many of these reforms were hard won through negotiations with multilateral lenders after decades of non-compliance or mandated due to Cameroon's membership in CEMAC. Consequently, most reforms remain incomplete and fail to meet their intended strategic goals.

Numerous government institutions are poorly managed and often used to place Biya supporters so they can gain access to patronage resources. This problem includes an oversized cabinet (the largest in Africa), an excessively large civil service and a weak national legislature. Decisions are typically driven by narrow political objectives, primarily aimed at securing the regime's survival. Implementing genuine political and economic institutional reforms would erode the ability of regime supporters to access patronage, thereby posing a significant threat to a core feature of the regime.

Pervasive corruption, limited accountability, and a fragmented bureaucracy limit the implementation of major policy initiatives. Cameroon passes IMF reviews with satisfactory marks, particularly on macroeconomic programs, often with external assistance.

For instance, a strong economic policy team has helped Cameroon commit to major infrastructural projects, such as the expansion of the Douala port and construction of hydropower plants. At the same time, a group of Western-educated technocrats and a handful of reform-oriented bureaucrats have helped create stable macroeconomic conditions through targeted privatization, reforms to public expenditure management and liberalization of fiscal and monetary policy.

However, issues with and delays to public finance management reform, banking reform and privatization persist. Many programs are also unevenly implemented, which perpetuates regional inequalities between the Extreme North/East Regions and the rest of the country. Conflict in Anglophone regions has also limited the government's ability to implement reconstruction programs in Northwest and Southwest Regions. As with prioritization, corruption underlies a political logic meant to help keep the current regime in power.

The political leadership has shown limited willingness to learn from its mistakes, but it listens to advice and adapts to some outside calls for reform. During COVID-19, the government worked with international organizations to develop appropriate responses that included tax alleviation for business and support for vulnerable populations but rejected civil society efforts to solicit donations and raise funds to combat COVID-19. The government likewise adopted new perspectives on poverty alleviation in the 2017 National Social Protection Policy and 2020 National Development Strategy. The government is sensitive to criticism. Mild forms of critique unleash harsh reactions, as evident in the crackdown on freedoms of

Implementation

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Policy learning

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expression surrounding the fight against Boko Haram and the Anglophone Crisis. Officials typically use their power extensively and ignore critical voices. Real efforts to engage in dialogue on controversial issues are simply absent. Committing to a reform program by its own initiative is rarely observed.

15 | Resource Efficiency

The government is highly inefficient in its use of assets, and resources are primarily deployed to satisfy political incentives. Pockets of administrative efficiency exist, primarily in terms of macroeconomic planning, but corruption is rampant in the public sector. The government loses vast resources during public procurement, and leakages occur at the local level during program implementation. The cabinet and civil service are bloated, and appointments are often politically expedient. For instance, in Yaoundé, there is a Minister of Public Health, a Secretary of State to the Ministry of Public Health delegated by the president's office and 10 regional representatives of the Ministry of Health. Cabinet reshuffles are common, largely to serve political ends. Processes of regional decentralization that began in 2021 have not resulted in increased efficiency in resource use but were designed primarily to expand the range of patronage resources the president could distribute.

Political fragmentation within a presidentially dominant system and corruption limit policy coordination. While the prime minister has coordination responsibilities across government ministries, he must wait on the president's decisions. Paul Biya spends at least one-third of the year abroad, with the result that once two years passed between cabinet meetings. The bloated size of Cameroon's government further limits policy coordination. Most ministers are appointed based on political calculus and not on competency. The president also appoints the secretary-generals of various ministries and sends delegates to monitor activities. This fosters a conflict-ridden environment, such that there is often competition and poor coordination within individual ministries. This fragmentation permeates down to the local level, where overlapping lines of authority impede coordination. Presidentially appointed governors, district officers and sub-district officers must cooperate with directly elected municipal councils and mayors, indirectly elected regional councils and various local committees and ministerial delegations.

The government has structures in place to detect and prosecute corruption. However, these are poorly enforced and perceived as highly politicized. The two main institutions that prosecute corruption are the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) within the Office of the Presidency and the Special Criminal Court. Since 2006 there has also been a coordinated anti-corruption drive known as Operation Sparrowhawk, which has reportedly produced dozens of convictions. The Supreme Court's Audit Bench is said to have some independence from the government, but most government finances are under the purview of the Supreme State Audit, which reports to the president and is therefore not completely independent.

Efficient use of assets

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Policy coordination

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Anti-corruption policy

3

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In collaboration with multilateral lenders, the CEMAC region has moved to harmonize public finance management, but Cameroon is just at the start of that process. Standard budgetary practices are frequently not respected by ministries. The National Procurement Regulation Agency (ARMP) within the Ministry of Public Works regulates public procurement, but specific rules are circulated as presidential decrees (the Public Procurement Code). In 2015 the ARMP moved much of the process online to reduce the prevalence of petty bribery. State-owned enterprises are often informally exempt from official public procurement processes. Officeholders are not held accountable since Article 66 of the Cameroonian constitution, which requires civil servants to declare assets, is not enforced. Likewise, Law 2006/001, which expands the range of public officials who should declare conflicts of interest, is not enforced. Finally, while public financing is available to parties there is little regulation or transparency. It is assumed that the ruling CPDM can raise money from the business elite without disclosure or any cap on contributions.

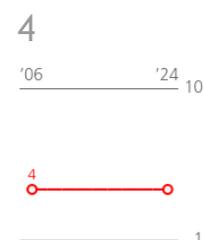
16 | Consensus-Building

Cameroon's government lacks any real capacity or willingness to seek consensus with major political players. The authoritarian nature of the regime silences debates and pushes major actors in society and elements of the electorate to tolerate the status quo. Likewise, the perpetuation of ethnicity as a basis for political gain limits the degree of consensus over democracy. The lack of consensus over democracy is evident in the controversial nature of recent elections (Paul Biya's re-election in 2018 and the CPDM's decimation of the opposition in 2020). Attempts to end the Anglophone Crisis are also one-sided. Policy developments like recognition of special status in Anglophone regions and the December 2020 regional council elections are likewise heavily criticized by non-government parties.

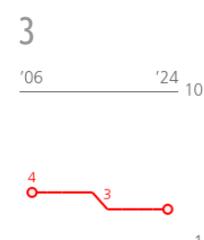
The authoritarian nature of the Cameroonian regime also limits consensus on the nature of the economy. Within the regime, there is a reform-minded elite, particularly among the younger generation, but they have only forged consensus around marginal improvements to economic management and broader measures of macroeconomic stability. There remain heavy restrictions on capitalist enterprise and significant state intervention in the economy, which sustain the political coalition that perpetuates the Biya regime.

Cameroon's authoritarian regime precludes the emergence of strong reform-minded political actors. The few reformers that do exist, from within and outside of the ruling party, do not have the clout to rein in non-democratic actors, who constitute the vast majority of government and public administration personnel. The most significant anti-democratic actor is the president himself. The re-election of Paul Biya in 2018 maintained the status quo and further limited any reform momentum within the administration. As long as Biya is in office, it is safe to assume that potential reformers will be hesitant to act for fear of repression. The creation of a Senate and

Consensus on goals



Anti-democratic actors



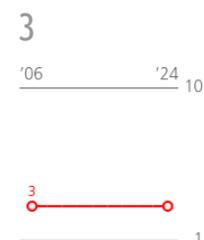
designation of the Speaker of the Senate as interim president in case of death while in office is not an indication of any empowered reform movement within the regime. Biya's control over the ruling party and decimation of any opposition – political and civil society based – leaves little room for reform-minded interests to gain power.

The political leadership is largely unable to manage cleavage-based conflict and takes steps to encourage societal and political fragmentation. The policy of “regional balancing” (i.e., public sector appointments that respect regional quotas) has been poorly implemented and has not prevented several identity groups from claiming that they are under-represented in government and public administration. There are major divisions between north-south, Anglophone-Francophone, urban-rural, west-east, Christian-Muslim and even between Northwest-Southwest Anglophone communities. The internal debate within the CPDM about who would succeed Paul Biya is primarily about which ethnic group would emerge on top. Many anticipate that this process could end up in violence, in part because the military is also divided along ethnic lines. The government benefits from this division since it ensures a strong base of core supporters for the regime (Beti) who feel threatened by changes to the status quo.

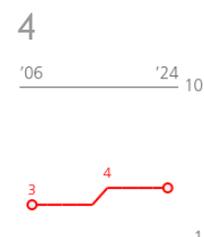
The inability to manage cleavage-based conflict is most evident in the Anglophone regions. The Francophone-Anglophone division has historically been one of the most difficult long-term cleavages to manage (in addition, there is also a division within the Anglophone community, between Northwest and Southwest Anglophone Cameroon). The government's delegation of an ad hoc committee to negotiate with protesters, while simultaneously using state violence, exacerbated tensions. Paul Biya leveraged this in his 2018 campaign (with the slogan “the force of experience”) and portrayed the Anglophones as a threat to the integrity of Cameroon. The platforms the government has provided and the concessions it has made to respond to this conflict, such as the Major National Dialogue of 2019, the special status designation or the 2020 regional council elections did not receive support from the major Anglophone groups and have not fundamentally lowered the level of conflict.

The political leadership fails to promote social capital and is largely indifferent to the role of civic engagement. Likewise, the government frequently ignores civil society, which it considers an oppositional force. In 2017 the government banned the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) and the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC), which cut off its main avenue of dialogue with the Anglophone movement. The government has also escalated its attack on freedom of association and expression, under the pretense of the threat of terrorism and the legal coverage of the 2014 anti-terror law. This attitude toward civil society participation is true in other realms. The government generally snubs civil society groups and thereby ignores the potential expertise some civil society groups may have on specific issues (climate change, poverty reduction, economic transformation). Local planning councils are often co-opted by the government and are not arenas for civil society participation.

Cleavage /
conflict
management



Public
consultation



The government appears unable and unwilling to publicly cope with legacies of violence and past injustices. Cameroon has gone through several phases of widespread violence and state repression that are rarely given the national spotlight. The most significant case would be the UPC rebellion of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which was violently repressed by the French and Cameroonian governments. Until today, this liberation movement is disparagingly referred to as a “rebel” movement. Other moments include the bloody coup attempt of 1984, the “years of burning” in the context of moving toward multiparty elections, and the 2008 nationwide protests against the abolishment of presidential term limits.

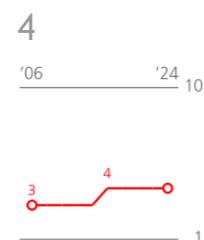
More recently, the government has been charged repeatedly with accusations of human rights abuses in both the Extreme North Region and in Anglophone regions. The government has only reluctantly, and under intense international pressure, accepted responsibility for certain events. Most clearly, in 2020, the government accepted responsibility for the death of 21 civilians in Ngarbuh, only after being presented with overwhelming evidence by several human rights organizations and the United Nations.

17 | International Cooperation

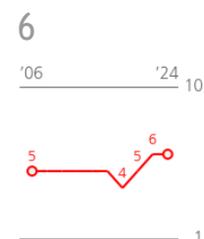
Cameroon’s leadership use international partners primarily for engagement on issues of economic development and regional security, but very little on questions of democracy and governance. Many of the major aid donors are present in Cameroon, targeting a range of sectors. The World Bank has ongoing projects and Cameroon passed the third review of a 2019 IMF Extended Credit Facility. The European Union and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) fund various development projects. The WHO and many other NGOs operate programs and offer technical expertise. While, in 2019, Cameroon lost its preferential trade status with the United States, in 2020, USAID upgraded its engagement with a “Limited Presence Country” to primarily work on issues regarding HIV/AIDs. Political leadership makes use of this assistance, but it does not translate into a consistent long-term strategy for development.

Cameroon lacks international partners to support efforts to improve democracy and governance. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie are the most persistent observers, but they have also been the subjects of criticism for their unwillingness to seriously criticize the regime and the state of democracy. Cameroon receives relatively low amounts of democracy aid and is not home to major institution-building efforts. The programs funded through USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) are focused on promoting youth leadership and mitigating the impact of conflict in northern Cameroon. The European Union funds the Civil Society Strengthening Programme (PASC) but has had difficulty finding local contract partners.

Reconciliation



Effective use of support



Cameroon's superficial stability as well as its strategic position in a restive region provides the government with an enormous amount of leniency with international partners. With the spillover of Boko Haram since 2014 and the Central African Republic crisis, diplomats and international aid workers have found further justification for ignoring poor implementation of reform initiatives and supporting the regime. This was once again notable with the tepid international response to the Anglophone Crisis. Outside of diplomatic calls for peaceful dialogue, no serious pressure has been exerted to force parties to the negotiating table. Consequently, and evident throughout its engagement with the international community, Cameroon has been able to skirt major reforms and resist real structural change to its politics or economy.

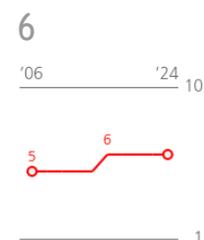
Cameroon has increased its international (and regional) security cooperation. It contributes troops to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and has allowed the Nigerian and Chadian armies to enter its territory. Likewise, Cameroon has permitted the United States to operate a drone base in the Extreme North. Cameroon is also a member of the G5 Sahel force, which was formed as a regional military coordination mechanism. Since 2021, the United States has begun to restrict visas for individuals associated with perpetuating the Anglophone Crisis.

Although it is seen as the pillar of the CEMAC region, Cameroon's credibility as a reliable partner has been mixed. For decades, Cameroon was a dependable partner of the French in the international arena, especially during disagreements with powerful states like the United States. Yet, in 2003 Cameroon was willing to abstain on a possible U.N. Security Council resolution on the Iraq War in exchange for American military aid. Similarly, Cameroon abstained from a U.N. vote that backed the "Goldstone Report" on the 2005 Israel-Gaza conflict, with the United States reportedly offering to support Cameroon in its territorial dispute in the Bakassi Peninsula. More recently, Cameroon abstained from a U.N. vote condemning Russia for its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and inked a military deal with Russia in April 2022. This is an indication that Cameroon seeks to maintain a relationship with Moscow for military support. Cameroon is a reliable partner in regional security operations but is not a party to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

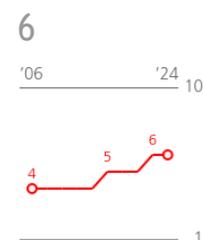
Cameroon is a member of many regional organizations, such as the African Union, the monetary union of the CFA franc zone, and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC). Within CEMAC, Cameroon is the most important market and producing economy.

Another pivotal point was the resolution of the Bakassi Peninsula dispute in 2009, which notably led to improved relations with Nigeria. As a result of this resolution, Cameroon and Nigeria have forged a partnership centered around regional security, particularly in combatting the threat posed by Boko Haram. This collaboration reached a noteworthy juncture in early 2018 when the Nigerian government facilitated the extradition of members belonging to the self-proclaimed "independent

Credibility



Regional cooperation



Ambazonia” administration. This gesture symbolized a deeper commitment to shared security concerns, allowing Cameroon the prerogative to pursue separatist militias across the border. Cameroon and the Central African Republic took a decisive step in 2022 by entering into an agreement to delineate their mutual border. The aim of this accord was to curb cross-border violence, fostering stability in the region. Parallel to these developments, Cameroon has demonstrated its commitment to regional security through participation in the G5 Sahel force since 2014. This coalition is chiefly dedicated to enhancing security cooperation within the region. However, it’s worth noting that despite these commendable regional cooperative initiatives, Cameroon’s role in broader aspects of Central African regional integration remains underdeveloped. In comparison to other sub-Saharan African regions, Central Africa still grapples with significant integration challenges. Thus, while Cameroon has been an active participant in regional security collaborations, there remains room for advancement in broader issues pertaining to the overall integration of the Central African region.

Strategic Outlook

Despite some progress in macroeconomic reform, Cameroon remains trapped in a state of inertia that appears both difficult and which the government is seemingly unwilling to overcome. While the Anglophone Crisis has brought issues of political stability to the fore of voters' concerns, Cameroon contrasts with the continent's trend of aging leaders being ousted or compelled to step down from power. President Paul Biya's enduring rule signifies Cameroon's lack of readiness to adapt to change. The issue of a "post-Biya" Cameroon is an ongoing concern, as Biya's tenure is expected to end with his death and the country lacks the political and institutional preparedness for such an eventuality. The transition is likely to be highly contested and possibly marked by violence. Mutual distrust, factionalism and ethnic interests have made the question of succession a zero-sum game for many. A troubling indicator is the existence of rivalries within the military, with some political elites maintaining close ties to specific officers, adding to the complexity of the situation.

A key factor perpetuating this outcome is a permissive international environment that views Cameroon as an "island of stability" in a strategically important region. Cameroon's close relationship with France, and more recently, the United States and Russia, has shielded it from serious criticism on the state of its democracy and economy. Moreover, international support has helped ensure that Cameroon remains in the good graces of international lenders. This cooperation is likely to continue and provide the regime with some protection from the domestic challenges it faces. Indicatively, while there were some changes between 2020 and 2022, no donor country has suspended aid or sanctioned the regime over its gross human rights violations, especially in its violent confrontations with the Anglophone movement.

Yet, even if the transition to a post-Biya regime is relatively peaceful, the institutions in place and the style of politics inculcated over the past 30 years are likely to continue. The use of patronage to build political support has been the primary cause of widespread public corruption and misallocation of state resources. Regime resistance to economic and political reform is driven by the elite's dependency on rents derived from the state (or state access) to sustain political support. Unless political incentives are realigned, it will be difficult for reform-minded elites to exert sufficient influence to push Cameroon toward real economic and political transformations.

For this reason, the economic returns on Cameroon's infrastructural investments and exploration of off-shore natural gas are likely to be limited. Without policy reforms and equal investments in human capital, only a few will benefit from economic gains, which will be otherwise eroded by corruption and inefficiencies. Cameroon lacks sufficient spending on health care, education and social protection. State intervention in the economy and a substantial public sector inhibit private entrepreneurship and confine the private sector to large firms that cannot generate enough jobs to lift the country out of poverty. The strategic outlook reveals an economy that continues to muddle through – supported by specific advantages, such as regional integration – but performs well below its potential.

The country's prolonged malaise has also had several social impacts that are likely to continue or worsen. There is massive demand for jobs and viable livelihoods among Cameroonians under the age of 25, who represent roughly 60% of the population. Coping with this demand will remain a key challenge for Cameroon in the years to come. Cameroonians increasingly express high distrust and disillusionment with most political institutions. Nowhere is the breakdown of social trust more evident than in the Anglophone regions, which contain approximately 25% of the population. Prolonged violence has polarized society and revealed that the regime is willing to use extreme violence to cope with challenges to its authority. The conflict will likely continue in the near future, perhaps not as intensely, but it will have generational impacts.

In international relations, Cameroon may be entering a period of change. Currently, there is a rivalry between France and Russia there, as Moscow has increasingly become a key strategic partner, particularly in terms of military and economic cooperation. It remains to be seen how this situation will unfold.