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The legislature as political control: change and continuity in Cameroon's National Assembly (1973–2019)*

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ABSTRACT

A growing literature has begun to more closely examine African legislatures. However, most of this research has been attentive to emerging democratic settings, and particularly the experiences of a select number of English-speaking countries. By contrast, Cameroon is a Francophone majority country that reintroduced multiparty politics in the early 1990s but continues to exhibit significant authoritarian tendencies. This article provides a longitudinal analysis of Cameroon's National Assembly and builds on a unique biographical dataset of over 900 members of parliament between 1973 and 2019. The article describes changes in the structure and orientation of the legislature as well as the social profile of its members, in particular following the transition to multipartyism. While the legislature in Cameroon remains primarily a tool of political control, it is more dynamic, and the mechanisms used to manage elites within the context of complex multiethnic politics have evolved.

Keywords: Cameroon; legislature; authoritarianism; multipartyism; longitudinal analysis

INTRODUCTION

A growing literature has begun to more closely examine African legislatures. While a subject of scholarly interest in the years after independence, the

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legislature was subsumed by more intense examination of the executive branch. Legislatures were seen as rubber stamp institutions, subservient to the logics of clientelism, and far less important than the politics that took place within cabinets (Collord 2018: 281). After the return of multiparty elections, scholarship focused primarily on presidential elections within the evolving contours of democratic competition, and much less attention was given to legislative races (Bleck & Van de Walle 2019: 178–84). However, over the past ten years there has been a concerted effort to reevaluate the legislature's ability to serve representative functions, check executive power and effectively legislate (Barkan 2009; Opalo 2019). Concurrently, there is burgeoning research that more closely interrogates how the pressures of competitive campaigns in resource-scarce environments shape the social composition of African legislatures and influence critical questions of representation (Tripp & Kang 2008; Barkan *et al.* 2010; Ichino & Nathan 2013).

Recent scholarship highlights the role of Members of Parliament (MPs) as constituency servants embedded in challenging social and institutional contexts. The liberalisation of politics has allowed more reform-minded MPs to enter legislatures, many of whom are entrepreneurial and less dependent on the state or a political party for their political longevity (Barkan 2009: 17–21). On the other hand, the continued dominance of single parties limits the ability of MPs to stake out more independence (Giollabhuí 2011). In some settings, voters have prioritised an MP's ability to effectively provide public goods and political accountability rather than simply clientelism (Lindberg 2010). However, many MPs are still constrained by the distributive demands placed upon them by constituents. Candidates are expected to expend considerable personal wealth on campaigns and are pressured to deliver state resources back to the community. Consequently, there has been growth in the number of business elites in legislatures and persistently high turnover rates that limits the professionalisation of legislatures (Koter 2017; Warren 2018).

Nonetheless, the study of African legislatures has not appreciated the full range of experience. There have been far fewer detailed explorations of French-speaking countries (Thomas & Sissokho 2005).[1] Likewise, the expansion of multipartyism has not always correlated with democracy. A significant portion of African countries are considered 'electoral authoritarian', whereby accepted standards of electoral competition are persistently violated (Morse 2019: 62–89). Scholars of comparative authoritarianism note the role of the legislature in elongating authoritarian rule by providing regulated access to patronage and setting parameters on what is considered proper elite behaviour (Gandhi 2008; Reuter & Turovsky 2014). Regimes use several strategies – including coercion – to ensure that legislatures remain compliant and that legislators remain trustworthy interlocutors. Understandably, research in authoritarian environments is challenging, which explains why so few studies have traversed this terrain (Weghorst Forthcoming: 19–21).

The case of Cameroon deserves closer attention for these reasons and can help provide a more complete picture of legislative development in Africa.

Cameroon is a Francophone majority country and one of Africa's clearest cases of electoral authoritarianism. There have been few studies dedicated exclusively to its National Assembly. As with neighbouring countries, Cameroon was compelled into multiparty elections following significant domestic protest and international pressure. However, these elections only led to a brief moment of true competition, and by 2002 the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) and President Paul Biya reasserted their dominance over political life through a combination of coercion and co-optation. Thus, with the exception of the internal succession from Ahmadou Ahidjo to Biya, there has been no real transition of power. Scholarship on Cameroon has almost exclusively focused on the ability of an exceptionally powerful executive to undermine democracy under both Ahidjo (Bayart 1978; Joseph 1978) and Biya (Takougang & Krieger 1998; Mbaku & Takougang 2004), as well as on how centralised control over state resources and the manipulation of ethnic identity have helped perpetuate a highly patrimonial and authoritarian regime (Konings 1996; Albaugh 2011; Arriola 2012).

This article provides the first comprehensive longitudinal analysis of the National Assembly in Cameroon and its legislators. Examining the period from 1973 to 2019, the article demonstrates how the legislature has continuously provided a means of political control under evolving conditions of authoritarianism. For Ahidjo, the legislature was mainly a site where a narrow circle of elites were given longer-term access to patronage in exchange for political quiescence. By contrast, under multipartyism the legislature has become more dynamic. Specifically, multipartyism has made campaigning and constituency representation key elements of legislative life, which has led to significant change in the social backgrounds of legislators. These changes have opened up the regime to new risks and forced it to adapt. There are still institutional guardrails that limit the independence of the legislature. But the regime has also exerted control by tilting the process of candidate selection toward perceived loyalists, namely civil servants. Moreover, the legislature has diversified ethnic representation, countering the larger regional blocs that defined the single-party era, and expanded opportunities for status seeking.

The article builds on extensive fieldwork conducted with the Cameroonian National Assembly. Specifically, it capitalises on unique access to biographical records for over 900 MPs between the years 1973 and 2013. Weak institutional capacity and restrictive political environments generally make access to such information quite difficult. This data was obtained across two years of fieldwork and facilitated by extensive relationship building with key informants in the National Assembly. The information comes from various sources and while not uniform across all time periods, it can be used to plot out major changes in the demographic, occupational, ethnic and partisan backgrounds of MPs, as well as certain milestones in their legislative career.[2] The next section describes the major stages in the evolution of Cameroon's National Assembly, with particular attention given to the contrast between the single and multiparty eras. The middle section of the article discusses the major

changes in the social composition of the legislature, while the last section looks at how high-status positions have been distributed.

THE INSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION OF THE LEGISLATURE IN CAMEROON

As in other African countries, a brief period of legislative vitality after independence gave way to the imperatives of political centralisation, which largely sidelined the legislature as a democratic institution. In French Cameroon, the 1956 *Assemblée Legislative du Cameroun* (ALCAM) was the first legislative body elected with universal suffrage and composed entirely of Cameroonians.[3] ALCAM was a multiparty legislature, but essentially a 'trust institution' that operated in consultation with the high commissioner (Atangana 2010: 38–40). ALCAM was anchored primarily around the division between André-Marie Mbida's Cameroonian Party of Democrats (PDC), Mbida having been selected as Prime Minister, and Ahmadou Ahidjo's Cameroonian Union (UC). Importantly, the nationalist Union of Cameroonian People (UPC) – arguably the most important pre-independence party – had been marginalised by the French with its radical wing engaged in armed insurrection. Moreover, with French support, Mbida was forced out of office in February 1958 and replaced with Ahidjo.[4] Despite vociferous legislative opposition, in October 1959 ALCAM provided Ahidjo with six months of emergency powers to confront the UPC rebellion and the right to appoint half of the constitutional committee (Awasom 2002: 9–14; Kamga & Kamdem 2015: 296–300).

Consequently, French Cameroon became independent with Ahidjo in a position of considerable strength. A new constitution created a semi-presidential system with a 100-member National Assembly and a president chosen by an electoral college. The constitution enshrined substantial executive privileges, including wide-ranging powers of appointment and the prerogative to dissolve the legislature. Likewise, the electoral law was structured in such a way as to benefit Ahidjo's UC. The entire north, where Ahidjo had a firm base of support among the Fulani, was considered one district with all seats going to the party with the most votes. By contrast, the oppositional southern regions primarily consisted of single member districts. Therefore, Ahidjo could easily sweep all the seats in the north while the south split the vote among four different parties. Bolstered by emergency powers, political pluralism declined precipitously as other parties merged into the UC, were forced into hiding, or simply ceased to exist.

In tandem, legislative life in British Southern Cameroons was preoccupied with the question of unification. Under the conditions of the Macpherson constitution, Cameroonians were represented in the Eastern and Northern regional assemblies as well as the National Assembly in Lagos. In 1954, Southern Cameroons was given quasi-autonomous status and in 1957 elected a 13-seat Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. The dividing line was primarily between John Ngu Foncha's Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP)

and Emmanuel Endeley's Kamerun National Congress (KNC). In 1958 Southern Cameroons was given full autonomous status within Nigeria and the House of Assembly expanded to 26 members. In addition, an upper House of Chiefs was created and voting rights were extended to women. The British commissioner retained the right to designate the parliamentary speaker. Foncha's unexpected narrow victory during the January 1959 election set in motion a process that led to the plebiscite on unification two years later (Johnson 1970: 200–86; Le Vine 1971: 26–30).

The parameters of unification did little to limit Ahidjo's hand and kept Southern Cameroons highly dependent on the federal government (Johnson 1970: 200–13). The Foumban constitution maintained the two state-level legislatures in what was now called Eastern and Western Cameroon, but also created a new 50-member federal legislature and a directly elected president. At the federal level, seats were distributed across six administrative regions. Western Cameroon was considered one region and held ten of the 50 seats, which is roughly proportional to its population. However, in Eastern Cameroon, the northern region received 28% of the federal seats even though it constituted only 13% of the population. Importantly, the constitution retained Ahidjo's presidential powers, which now extended to Western Cameroon. Since Western Cameroon was a singular administrative region, Ahidjo could divert state resources through his power to appoint the regional inspector (Stark 1976: 432). By 1966, all remaining parties had merged into Ahidjo's vehicle for single-party rule, the Cameroon National Union (CNU). By 1972, federalism was abolished in a referendum (Takougang & Krieger 1998: 48–9).[5]

The end of federalism marks the apex of Ahidjo's powers and the development of many of the contemporary features of the legislature. The new National Assembly elected 120 members for five-year terms. While seats were still loosely distributed in proportion to the population of the seven major regions, individual constituencies were abolished. All MPs between 1973 and 1983 were elected in a single constituency that covered the entire country. Since the CNU was the only legal party, legislative elections were essentially plebiscites. The assembly operated five committees (constitutional affairs, education, finance, foreign affairs and production), and selected senior leadership into a Bureau of the National Assembly. In addition to the President of the National Assembly, the Bureau consisted of four Vice-Presidents, two Questors and seven Secretaries. The assembly met in ordinary and plenary sessions for 30 days approximately three to four times a year and maintained a small support staff.

Under Ahidjo the legislature was entirely subservient to the presidency. As others have noted, the post-1972 system was highly 'Gaullist' and emblematic of 'Big Man' politics (Joseph 1978). Ahidjo could dissolve or extend parliament and introduce bills directly into the plenary without committee markup. Likewise, the legislature granted the president wide executive authority over several realms, which elevated presidential decrees and ordinances to the status of law (Nelson 1973: 133–46). Individual MPs could be controlled

through the CNU's centralised nomination system and Ahidjo's control of the purse strings (DeLancey 1987: 12–13; Morse 2019: 107–11). Legislative positions were less lucrative than cabinet positions, but nonetheless attracted over 2,500 candidates per election (Union 1973, 1978). Candidates could self-nominate within 15 days of the election, but the finalised list was selected by the 12 members of the CNU's Political Bureau, and often by Ahidjo himself. The key institutional role in the legislature – the President of the National Assembly – was filled by Samuel Tandeng Muna, Ahidjo's key Anglophone ally in the move away from federalism.

The contentious transition of power to Ahidjo's Prime Minister Paul Biya brought changes to the legislature. Most notably, following economic downturn and an attempted coup in 1984, Biya began to realign ruling institutions away from the Ahidjo-era elites. This shift has been described as the move from the 'Garoua Mafia' to the 'Beti Barons' (van de Walle 1994: 143–4). First, the number of administrative regions that could nominate candidates was expanded to ten, thus weakening the Fulani hold on the northern bloc (DeLancey 1989: 52). The creation of the CPDM in 1985 was accompanied by an expansion of the Central Committee, which gave Biya more control over the legislative nomination process. In 1988, the National Assembly was expanded to 180 members and elections were held in a mixture of 4 single-member and 45 multi-member districts. The CPDM likewise liberalised the nomination process and allowed two competing lists to run in each constituency. The end result was a stunning 85% legislative turnover between 1983 and 1988.

Cameroon's transition to multipartyism is well documented (Takougang & Krieger 1998), but despite a serious electoral challenge in the early 1990s the CPDM has been able to regain its dominant status. This was accomplished in part by gerrymandering that grossly overallocated seats to supportive regions and increased the number of single-member districts in opposition areas (Albaugh 2011; Opalo 2012: 87–8). In addition, strategic repression, control of the election management body, and electoral fraud have perpetuated an essentially electoral authoritarian regime (Morse 2019: 51–61). Relatedly, while liberalisation has provided additional space for political opposition, the regime has been able to skirt major transformations to its economy or implement serious constitutional reforms that would limit executive power (Van de Walle 2001: 188). Most notably, elements of the 1996 constitution such as the creation of a Senate were delayed for nearly 15 years. With a strong legislative majority and control of the key legislative gatekeeper – the President of the National Assembly – major political parties like the UPC and National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) entered into alliances with the CPDM. The Social Democratic Front (SDF) has been the largest and most consistent opposition party.

While multipartyism has changed certain institutional features of Cameroon's legislature, these developments have not in any real sense empowered the legislature. The presence of opposition parties has translated into more floor debate

and an increase in the number of private member bills offered (i.e. bills not offered by a legislator acting on behalf of the executive). However, the vast majority of these bills are either rejected by the President of the National Assembly or defeated in committee. In total, between 1992 and 2007 only 18 private member bills have been adopted, reflecting ~5% of all bills adopted (Ntamack 2011: 113). There has also been an increase in the use of amendments, particularly by opposition parties, but also by CPDM members. Indeed, no bill since 1992 has been passed without amendments. However, the CPDM's legislative majority ensures that these amendments are mainly technical, while anything controversial is rejected. Likewise, the President of the National Assembly can table bills just prior to recess and prevent serious debate (Ntamack 2011: 118).[6]

Similarly, the relative power and assertiveness of the legislature has only moderately changed. The 1996 constitution reinstated the role of the Prime Minister, but his role is to implement government policy and not initiate it. The legislature now has broader oversight capacities, including budgetary review by the finance committee, formal measures like votes of no confidence and sanctions, and the ability to hold question and answer sessions and launch special enquiries. Since 1992, the finance committee has increasingly exercised its oversight prerogative, but its influence on the budget is nonetheless limited. The National Assembly usually receives the budget with little time to review, and lacks the technical staff to properly earmark or audit its execution (Njoh Mouelle 2002: 110–15; Ntamack 2011: 148–53). For instance, MPs are excluded from the Tenders Board that oversees public contracts (Ntamack 2011: 155). Votes of no confidence and censures have never been used, and question and answer sessions are limited by what the President of the National Assembly deems worthy. There have also been just two official legislative enquiries.[7]

At the same time, the legislature has become an expansive site for the distribution of patronage. Cavayé Yéguié Djibril has remained President of the National Assembly since 1992, which is a considerable concession to his political network in the north. Legislative salaries are comparatively low (~800,000 CFA a month) but MPs can also access fringe benefits that include 8 million CFA in support funds and 5 million CFA in personal allowances per session. Likewise, access to the legislature offers considerable opportunities for MPs to obtain public contracts and attain preferential treatment for private business interests. Leadership positions in the legislature provide substantially more perks in terms of salary and allowances, which can range from 45 to 80 billion CFA.[8] As noted in Table I, there are now nine committees, six Vice Presidents, nine Questors and 12 Secretaries.

An important change that multipartyism has brought is a stronger emphasis on constituency service. Under Ahidjo, legislators were selected in accordance with some notion of ethnic balance at the regional level. While calculations of local popularity or performance might have been taken into consideration, the absence of constituency-level representation meant that fealty to Ahidjo was a central concern for legislators, rather than delivering local investments

TABLE I
Changes in the structure of Cameroon's National Assembly (1973–2019)

Year	Number of seats	Ratio of single to multimember districts	Number of committees	Number of Vice Presidents	Number of Questors	Number of Secretaries
1973	120	n/a	5	4	2	7
1978	120	n/a	5	4	2	7
1983	120	n/a	5	4	2	7
1988	180	3–46	5	4	2	7
1992	180	4–45	6	6	4	12
1997	180	22–52	6	6	4	12
2002	180	22–52	9	6	4	12
2007	180	34–50	9	6	4	12
2013	180	34–50	9	6	4	12

* Data is from author's database.

in infrastructure or education, or even supporting local supporters with direct clientelism. Concurrently, legislators during the single-party era had very little control over development funds at the local level. Legislators could request up to 4 million CFA in the state's investment budget for local projects. However, these requests were not made public and were managed by the Ministry of the Economy, Planning, and Regional Development (Ntamack 2011: 207–8). Likewise, the Ahidjo era is noted for major initiatives to promote rural development and limit poverty – the so-called 'Green Revolution'. The National Fund for Rural Development (FONADER) became a key tool of the central government for directing resources to rural citizens.

Under multipartyism legislators developed stronger ties with constituents. Beginning in 1992, the CPDM began to organise local-level primaries with delegate voting to nominate candidates. Concurrently, the number of single-member districts increased significantly (see Table I), which encourages legislators to develop local bases of support and stronger relationships with voters. Indicative of the stronger role constituents now play, between 1992 and 2013, 50–60% of the legislative slate was eliminated during the selection stage.[9] Individual legislators are also expected to burden the costs of campaigning and return resources to their constituency. As Njoh Mouelle notes, 'the MP does not go to see his electorate empty handed. A political meeting cannot be held without capping it all with a reception' (2002: 64). Importantly, national programmes like FONADER ended, and legislators were given more funding for local development projects and greater discretion over spending. This increase in 'micro-project funding' became an important tool that connected legislators to the constituency (Njoh Mouelle 2002: 65).

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The elevation of constituency service and the liberalisation of candidate selection seems counterintuitive given the imperatives of political control set out by Ahidjo and elaborated upon by Biya. However, in electoral authoritarian regimes such as Cameroon, this dynamic is fairly common. Local primaries encourage the nomination of candidates with sufficient social clout, while high turnover ensures that political power rotates among influential social groups. Moreover, the CPDM has retained key gatekeeping measures. While the CPDM's minimal criteria for candidacy are not overly restrictive, between 1992 and 2007 the Central Committee held the right to overturn local primary results. However, this prerogative was rarely used, likely because it risked its own form of backlash. By the 2013 election the CPDM moved to a semi-centralised selection system. While constituencies still submitted lists of candidates and could signal their preferences by running a primary, the final candidate list had to be endorsed by the Central Committee.[10] This gave the regime more control over the legislative slate, while remaining attentive to constituency demands.

THE SHIFTING BACKGROUNDS OF CAMEROONIAN MPS

This section presents information from a biographical dataset of 972 legislators who served between 1973 and 2019. These data are used to plot out key changes in the demographic, occupational, partisan and ethnic background of legislators. As in other African legislatures, elected representatives are an elite class that has become gradually older, more educated and gender diverse. Likewise, multipartyism corresponds with increased prominence given to business and professional elites, indicative of the financial challenges of campaigning (Hornsby 1989; Pinkston 2016; Koter 2017). As indicated, these changes have only marginally empowered the Cameroonian legislature. Indeed, two key developments unique to Cameroon are reflective of regime adaptation to the multiparty era in a continued effort to exert control. First, the legislature has retained a significant proportion of former civil administrators. Arguably, the civil service allows regimes to vet candidates and prepare them for multiparty competition. Second, the ethnic background of legislators has diversified greatly, limiting the possibility of cross-ethnic coalition making. The data are presented across major regime periods and aggregate all political parties, with more detail available in the supplemental materials (see Online Appendices 1 and 5).

Basic demographics (age, education, sex)

As elsewhere in Africa, Cameroon's MPs have become progressively older and better educated. In 1973, the average age of an MP was 44 and the average age when elected was just 40. By 2013, the average age rose to 54 and the average age elected to 48 (see Table II). This is congruent with the expansion of educational opportunities and the increased competition for legislative positions that followed the introduction of multiparty elections. Indeed, during

TABLE II

Demographic and occupational background of Cameroonian MPs (1973–2019)

Time period	1973–1982	1983–1991	1992–2001	2002–2019
Demographic background				
Age	45	47	48	50
Age elected	42	43	46	46
% Women	7.9%	14.3%	8.6%	17.3%
% Below secondary education	12.9%	9.3%	11.6%	13.5%
% Secondary education	5.4%	4.3%	2.5%	0.7%
% Some higher education	33.3%	30.7%	10.2%	7.8%
% Tertiary education	35.0%	30.7%	57.7%	45.6%
% Post-graduate education	13.3%	25.0%	18.0%	32.5%
Occupational background				
% Education	25.8%	28.0%	18.8%	12.4%
% Junior administration	30.0%	18.0%	15.0%	13.8%
% Senior administration	11.3%	9.3%	10.8%	14.6%
% Petty professional	6.7%	7.7%	9.4%	5.4%
% Senior professional	3.8%	5.7%	9.7%	11.3%
% Junior business	2.9%	12.3%	13.3%	16.6%
% Senior business	1.3%	2.0%	6.1%	13.7%
% Agriculture/Farming	5.8%	5.0%	5.5%	3.9%
% Clerk/Worker	2.5%	2.7%	5.3%	2.6%
% Military/Police	0.0%	1.0%	2.8%	0.4%
% Non-profit/Civil society	0.4%	1.7%	0.3%	2.0%
% Other	0.0%	1.7%	2.5%	1.7%
% Unknown	9.6%	5.0%	0.8%	1.9%
Other information				
% Traditional title	16.3%	8.3%	4.1%	5.0%
% Locally elected	7.9%	4.7%	6.1%	11.4%
% Section leadership	n/a	n/a	n/a	35.0%
% Sub-Section leadership	n/a	n/a	n/a	46.9%

* Data are from author's database

single-party rule MPs from more rural and socioeconomically depressed areas (Adamawa, Far North, North and East) were on average 10 years younger when elected compared with MPs from other regions. Since 1992, the average age of MPs from underdeveloped areas has increased, but still remains lower compared with MPs from the more urban and commercial regions. While in other contexts of electoral authoritarianism opposition parties draw a larger youth share (Weghorst Forthcoming), there are no significant differences in age between regime and opposition parties.

The question of age has become more contentious since the multiparty era. Under single party rule the age of an MP was left entirely at the discretion of the CNU's Central Committee. However, local primaries allow voters to evaluate

candidates based on their age. On the one hand, older MPs with higher levels of educational attainment and longer professional careers are likely more effective interlocutors with cabinet ministers and senior government officials. In contexts where the delivery of constituency-level goods is essential, older candidates are therefore better positioned. On the other hand, there is an expectation that legislative seats rotate more often and remain accessible to younger candidates. Between 1992 and 2013 the proportion of MPs in their 60s grew from 10% to 21%, while that of MPs under 40 dropped from 21% to 5%. The CPDM responded to this trend prior to the 2020 election by issuing a circular that directed local branches of the party to nominate younger candidates.[11]

Related to age, the legislature has also become considerably more educated. Higher education is a key avenue to personal advancement and is a signifier of elite status. A more educated class of legislators also possibly translates into more assertive and professional legislative behaviour (Barkan 2009). Cameroon has no educational requirement for legislative candidates outside of basic literacy. Nonetheless, higher education has become an important informal prerequisite for legislative candidacy. As of 2013, 54% of MPs had the equivalent of a bachelor's degree while 21% had postgraduate education. The most common educational pathway to the legislature is through Cameroon's premiere civil service school, the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM). As noted below, this is due to the role of the civil service as a source of political recruitment. Regional differences continue to exert influence, which explains why a non-trivial percentage of Cameroonian MPs still just have secondary or below secondary-level education.

While the National Assembly has evolved with regards to gender representation, it remains a male-dominated institution. Both the CNU and CPDM maintained women's wings as key mobilising institutions. Nonetheless, the proportion of women in the legislature during the single-party era only increased from 6% in 1973 to 14% in 1988. The bulk of these women were from the more urban Centre, Littoral and West regions. Indeed, the more conservative and rural north had just seven female MPs during this entire period. Following the transition to multipartyism there was initially a decline in female representation. Given that levels of female political participation likely did not drop suddenly following multipartyism, we can assume that women were disadvantaged by the liberalisation of the candidate selection process (Atanga 2010; Touo 2010). Prior to the 2013 election, Cameroon instituted a gender quota that significantly increased female representation to 30%. Notably, opposition parties have not been as successful at cultivating female representation, as just 19% of their seats are occupied by women.

There remain questions about whether increases in female representation translate into substantive power. During single-party rule women were overrepresented in the education committee (22% of members), which was perceived as less prestigious and influential. Likewise, there were no female Questors or Vice Presidents and just three female Secretaries. Since multipartyism, women

have been heavily overrepresented on the cultural affairs committee (35% of members), and underrepresented on most other committees, in particular finance. Likewise, since 1992 just two women have been made Vice Presidents (Rose Agbor Abunaw and Emilia Lifaka Monjowa) and two women have been made Questors (Madeline Mbono Samba and Pauline Ndoumou Ebah). Other studies have documented less time allocated to women during parliamentary sessions and it is difficult to demonstrate a substantive shift in the focus of legislation (Atanga 2010).

Occupational backgrounds

As summarised in Table II, the single-party era was dominated by MPs who took advantage of the few opportunities for advancement under colonialism – the education system and the civil administration. Just 10% of MPs during this period were involved in some form of private business, and the majority of those businesspeople were involved in smaller-scale operations. Likewise, there was not a significant professional class represented in the legislature, and most MPs with such a background held lesser positions such as accountant or nurse and were likely also employed by the state. Just 5% of MPs under Ahidjo were senior professionals such as doctors or barristers. A small contingent of MPs were primarily employed in agriculture, while others were employees of firms, former members of the military, or employed in other occupations such as midwife or driver.

Multipartyism corresponds with a significant shift in the occupational background of MPs. Most prominently, the proportion of MPs from the business sector, and specifically senior businesspeople, has grown to 25%. Since 1992 the legislature has included owners and managers of major public works, natural resource extraction, transportation and agroindustry companies. Concurrently, by 2013 there were twice as many senior professionals in the legislature – primarily university lecturers and medical professionals. At the same time, while their total number has declined, the most represented occupational background remains civil administrators. Specifically, while the proportion of junior administrators has fallen since multipartyism, the proportion of senior administrators has increased. By contrast, the currency of MPs with backgrounds in the educational sector has declined greatly. The proportion of MPs with occupations in agriculture or clerical positions has remained fairly constant, while there are now slightly more MPs who emerged from the non-profit sector.

Changes in the occupational background of MPs are explained by a number of factors. First, the liberalization of the economy and the growing importance of campaign finance has helped the emergence of a strong business cohort in the legislature. Not only are there more opportunities for individuals to accumulate wealth, but the CPDM requires such elites to bear the costs of electoral politics. Second, while the civil administration has always been a key source of political recruitment, it has become more salient under Biya. Civil administrators are generally recruited from ENAM. Once in government, ambitious

elites can network with senior administrative figures in preparation for elected office. Moreover, many positions in government provide unique opportunities for rent-seeking, such as customs officials or financial controllers (Cantens 2010). Consequently, legislative candidates who emerge from civil service can shoulder the financial burdens of campaigning and the pressures of constituency service on par with business elites. Notably, civil administrators grew in influence during the 2013 selection process, when the CPDM did away with local primaries. Of the 51 legislators dismissed between 2007 and 2013, 43% were businesspeople while just 29% were civil administrators. On the other hand, 43% of their replacements were civil administrators while just 20% were businesspeople. While inconclusive, these changes strongly imply an intensifying strategy of authoritarian maintenance by exerting more control over career pathways, possibly to counterbalance the rising influence of business.

Three more points are worth noting about occupational backgrounds. First, the proportion of MPs with a traditional title has also declined from 17% in 1973 to just 5% in 2013. While an important part of the small elite that was available during the early legislatures, Ahidjo was also apprehensive about traditional authorities. In 1977, state-recognised chieftaincies were transformed into administrative auxiliary institutions and made subordinate to sub-district officers. Following the transition to multipartyism, Paul Biya encouraged the creation of ethnic associations, which empowered traditional elites, but mainly as a way to undercut opposition support (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998). Second, more MPs now enter the legislature after holding a local position such as municipal councilor or mayor. As elsewhere, experience at the local level helps candidates build their reputation and networks of influence (Bleck and van de Walle 2019: 182). Since 1992, most MPs with local political experience have been junior businesspeople.[12]

Third, opposition parties have quite different occupational backgrounds – 26% have been senior professionals, 20% junior businesspeople, 13% teachers and 13% senior administrators. The role of senior professionals corresponds with a narrative particular to the SDF, which drew heavily upon the Anglophone-Francophone divide and built ties with important Anglo civil society organisations such as the Confederation of Anglophone Parent-Teachers Associations and the Cameroonian Bar Association (Krieger 2008). Business elites, particularly from the Bamileke ethnic group, were also initially a key source of recruitment in the SDF. However, over time many Bamileke elites were drawn back into the CPDM (Arriola 2012). By contrast, the NUDP has recruited more heavily from former civil administrators, many of whom draw lineage to the old Ahidjo regime.

Party experience

The implication of the foregoing is that partisan careers are not an effective way for the ruling party to recruit, socialise or vet legislative candidates. Indeed, since the legislative elite under Ahidjo emerged outside of the CNU, the

party never developed a true grassroots presence to recruit new blood. The CPDM was meant to address these organisational shortcomings, and since 1992 legislative candidates have been required to demonstrate partisan careers. However, while the organisational basis of the ruling party has improved, it is not a 'mass party', and comes nowhere near to providing an infrastructure that would help cultivate legislative candidates. Many supposed sections and sub-sections of the party, including youth wings, often exist on paper with little physical real estate. Likewise, many subnational elements of the CPDM only meet sporadically, generally in preparation for elections. In fact, the biographical record does not provide much information about an MP's partisan experience prior to 2002. This is partially due to problems of record keeping, but also because partisanship was likely less important.

While we cannot compare the partisan records of those nominated versus those not nominated, we can look at the levels of partisan seniority of elected MPs since 2002. Since 2002, ~80% of MPs have held some official role at the sub-section level of their party, while 64% have held roles at the section level (broadly corresponding with the constituency). Of those, roughly half were in a senior leadership position at the sub-section level and a third in a senior leadership position at the section level. A good number of MPs (~20%) simultaneously held senior roles at both the sub-section and section level of the party, therefore reducing the total number of MPs who were party leaders. Therefore, while partisan experience is now necessary to contest a legislative seat, rising up the ranks within the party hierarchy seems less determinative. There is no distinctive geographic distribution either, which might indicate variation in party organisation. Notably, records of partisanship are even weaker among opposition parties, where only 25% of MPs have any partisan experience and just 8% were sub-section leaders.

Ethnic representation

Questions of ethnic balance and integration have been key factors in Cameroon but are complicated by the fact that there are over 250 recognised ethno-linguistic groups. Implicit ethnic quotas have been used to allocate opportunities ranging from cabinet positions to public investment to higher education admissions. While Ahidjo publicly emphasised national unity, he arranged this distribution along aggregate groups that mimicked the regions, while maintaining Fulani domination. Notably, the Fulani are not the majority in the northern regions, which include other important Muslim groups such as the Kotoko and Kanuri. Likewise, several northern groups are often referred to collectively as 'Kirdi' (Fulani for pagan). This is misleading, since there are significant cultural differences between the non-Fulani groups in the Mandara-speaking regions of the North and Far North and the various ethnic groups distributed across the Adamawa plains. However, since the north was amalgamated into a single political constituency and candidate selection was centralised, the Fulani were at an advantage. Other implicitly recognised groups under

Ahidjo were the Beti-Fang of Center-South, the Maka of East, the Bamileke and Bamoun of West, the various Sawabantu groups of Littoral (primarily the Bassa, Bakossi and Douala), and the Anglophone communities (the North Western 'Grassfield' kingdoms and the Bakweri groups of South West). As noted in Table III, under Ahidjo the Fulani held seats that were nearly twice their population size, while several other important ethnic groups were not represented in the legislature.[13]

The expansion of the legislature and single-member constituencies has led to substantial changes in ethnic representation.[14] Not only has the central node of the ruling coalition shifted away from the Fulani to Biya's co-ethnics, but there has been diversification in ethnic representation. Looking at the data, the proportion of Fulani has declined to just 11%, which is consistent with their size in the population, while the proportion of Beti has increased to 20%. Congruently, there have been increases in representation primarily from the non-Fulani northern groups such as the Mandara speakers, the Adawama language groups and the Gbaya (which also extend into East region). Choa Arabs have also gained more representation in the Far North, largely at the expense of the Kanuri and Kotoko (Socpa 2003). In other regions, the Tiv and Banyang-Ekoi groups of South West have more representation, as do the Bafia of Centre region. In a narrow sense, these changes in ethnic representation have made the legislature more 'representative', but also less socially integrative. For Biya, empowering and activating new subgroup identities disarms potential opposition by hindering coordination and coalition-making efforts.

These classifications might actually understate the diversification of ethnic representation, since there are important distinctions within the subgroups that are not captured in Table III. For instance, within the Mandara-speaking group, the Guiziga and Mafa people have nearly doubled their legislative representation, while the Kapsiki and Podoko have elected their first MPs. Among the Adamawa-language groups, the Toupouri were the most represented during single-party rule and later formed the backbone of the Movement for the Defense of the Republic (MDR). The MDR famously entered an alliance with the CPDM that gave Biya a legislative majority in 1992. Since then, the MDR has been offered positions in the executive branch, which has left the legislature open to elect the first Chamba, Dii, Fali, Kwanja, Koutine, Mbum and Mundang MPs. Within the broader Sawabantu category, only the Douala and Bakossi were elected to the legislature under Ahidjo, while since 1992 there have been Besseke, Dibom and Pongo MPs. More fine-grained detail on this breakdown can be found in the supplementary material (see Online Appendix 2).

Notably, these new dynamics of ethnic diversification are not paralleled elsewhere in the regime and reflect the unique stature of the legislature and its capacity to increase the number of relevant ethnic identities. Even though the cabinet has expanded under Biya, and is now the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, there are far more limitations on how many groups can be mobilised

TABLE III

Ethnic composition of Cameroon's National Assembly (1973–2019)

Time period Major group	Subgroups	1973–1982	1983–1991	1992–2001	2002–2013
Anglophone (NW)	Grassfield kingdoms (e.g. Tikar, Widikum)	11.3%	11.6%	11.0%	11.1%
Anglophone (SW)	Bakweri and other Sawabantu	6.2%	5.5%	5.8%	5.4%
Anglophone (SW)	Banyang-Ekoi	0.8%	1.4%	1.2%	1.0%
Anglophone (SW)	Tiv	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%
Total Anglophone		18.3%	18.5%	18.3%	17.9%
Bamileke		17.1%	13.7%	15.3%	13.1%
Bamoun		2.5%	2.7%	2.6%	2.2%
South-Central region	Beti-Fang (e.g. Beti, Bulu, Manguisa)	15.0%	16.8%	18.8%	20.0%
South-Central region	Mbam-Speakers (e.g. Yambassa)	1.7%	1.0%	0.6%	1.2%
South-Central region	Bafia	0.0%	0.3%	0.9%	0.8%
Total South-Central		16.7%	17.8%	20.3%	22.0%
Littoral region	Bakoko-Bassa	4.6%	4.1%	4.1%	4.8%
Littoral region	Sawabantu (e.g. Bakossi, Douala)	5.5%	6.5%	5.7%	4.8%
Total Littoral		10.1%	10.6%	9.8%	9.6%
Fulani		17.1%	14.0%	13.6%	10.5%
Eastern region	Maka	3.3%	2.7%	2.9%	2.2%
Eastern region	Baka	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total Eastern		3.3%	2.7%	2.9%	2.2%
Northern non-Fulani	Mandara-Speakers (e.g. Kapsiki, Mafa, Wandala)	5.4%	5.5%	5.8%	8.1%
Northern non-Fulani	Musgum-Masa	2.5%	2.7%	1.5%	2.8%
Northern non-Fulani	Kotoko	1.7%	1.0%	0.9%	1.2%
Northern non-Fulani	Choa Arab	0.0%	0.7%	1.2%	1.6%
Northern non-Fulani	Kanuri	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Total Northern non-Fulani		4.6%	4.7%	3.6%	5.0%
Adamawa plains	Adamawa-Speakers (e.g. Dii, Mbum, Toupouri)	2.5%	5.1%	3.2%	2.8%
Adamawa plains	Ubangi-Speakers (e.g. Gbaya)	0.8%	1.7%	2.9%	3.8%
Adamawa plains	Mambile-Speakers (e.g. Vute)	0.0%	1.0%	0.6%	1.2%
Total Adamawa plains		3.3%	7.8%	6.7%	7.8%
Other groups		1.3%	1.4%	0.3%	0.6%

* Data are from author's dataset. In parentheses are examples of additional sub-groups.

and represented. Recent studies of ethnic representation in the cabinet show that on average 42% of portfolios have been allocated to the Beti-Fang and that many major ethnic groups are grossly underrepresented (Raleigh and Wigmore-Shepherd 2020). Therefore, broader ethnic cleavages and conflicts over distribution and access to political power remain relevant at other levels of the regime.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF LEGISLATIVE STATUS

This section focuses on the distribution of major legislative leadership roles and specific committee appointments. Even in democratic legislatures, positions of status are not necessarily allocated according to seniority and experience, but rather political expediency. In Cameroon, these determinations must also be understood through evolving patterns of political control. During the single-party era, the distribution of high-status positions followed the regional and ethnic logic that defined the Ahidjo era. Prominent political opponents were co-opted into senior roles that offered considerable material benefits, while political allies – especially the Fulani – were appointed strategically. With multipartyism there has been significant expansion in opportunities for prestige seeking and diversification in who is represented in these roles. As noted, the size of the Bureau and the number of committee chairmanships has expanded. These positions offer more fringe benefits, but also considerably more access to rent-seeking and other material profit. Certain committees such as finance provide opportunities to direct state budgets. Space precludes fuller presentation of this information, which can be found in the supplementary material (see Online Appendices 3, 4 and 6).

Under Ahidjo, legislative leadership roles were allocated to sustain a patronage coalition based on the major regional-ethnic groups. The appointment of Solomon Muna Tandeng as President of the National Assembly was a significant concession to Anglophones following the abolishment of federalism. The Vice President positions were similarly held by representatives of major ethnic groups, some of which were former rivals: Théodore Mayi-Matip (a Bassa and former leader of the UPC), Adolphe Pachong (an influential Bamileke) and Frederic Sandjol Zambo (a Maka). The fourth Vice President, Moussa Yaya Sarkifada, was a key Fulani ally of Ahidjo's. The two Questor positions were held by Cavayé Yéguié Djibril, a Mada who would later become a keystone of the legislature, and Emah Basile, the Beti Mayor of Yaoundé. The seven Secretary positions were given to Thomas Ebonglame (a popular Bakossi Anglophone), Augustin Ngom Jua (a Grassfield Anglophone and former Prime Minister of West Cameroon), Harouna Njoya (a Bamoun), Isabelle Ebanda (a Douala and president of the CNU's Women's Wing), Paul Amougou (a Beti), Oumarou Babale (a Fulani and traditional ruler of Mayo Oulo) and Samuel Ngang Mbile (a Maka).

The logic of co-optation and political survival also carried over to committee appointments. The finance committee – arguably the most desirable appointment – was disproportionally stacked with prominent Anglophones, including Thomas Ebongalame. Likewise, Théodore Mayi-Matip and Emah Basile served on the finance committee. Notably, the Fulani were initially underrepresented on the finance committee. This is perhaps because of the opportunities found in the executive branch under Ahidjo. But it is also notable that in 1973 the Fulani were heavily represented on the constitutional affairs committee and the chair was key loyalist Moussa Yaya Sarkifada. Likewise, the constitutional

affairs committee was home to more junior civil servants who emerged from a much more monitored civil service pipeline compared with the senior civil servants who achieved their roles under the French or British. On the other hand, Anglophones were underrepresented on the constitutional affairs committee. This is expected, given the strategic importance of the committee at the time for implementing the provisions of the post-federal constitution.

Some of this logic continued into the early years of the Biya regime. In 1988 Lawrence Fonka Shang, another Grassfield Anglophone, replaced Tandeng. The four Vice Presidents were relatively less known, but still included a Bassa (Antoine Logmo Nnyb), Bamileke (Clement Poufong), Fulani (Wabi Abdoulaye) and Maka (Enoch Mekoulou). Similarly, the two Questors were a Masa (Robert Kalvoskou) and Beti (Joseph Mballa). The majority of these legislative leaders also served on the finance committee, which by 1988 tilted toward the Beti and non-Fulani northern groups. Likewise, Biya retained allies in gatekeeping positions. The constitutional affairs committee – which once again became crucial in the early 1990s – was staffed by considerably more Beti and non-Fulani northerners. The chair of the constitutional affairs committee was also the CPDM's chief whip and close Biya ally, Gabriel Mballa (a Beti).

The more significant changes to the allocation of senior roles occurred after multipartyism. First, the most important gatekeeping position– the President of the National Assembly – moved away from Anglophones into the hands of Cavayé Yéguié Djibril. A product of the civil administration and a parliamentary fixture since 1970, Djibril's political longevity is unparalleled in Cameroonian politics. Since he was not associated with any of the major ethnic cleavages, he could act as a trustworthy interlocuter under both Ahidjo and Biya. Djibril's network among the Mada people in Mayo Sava was a key element in Biya's legislative reorientation away from the Fulani. Second, the number of leadership positions nearly doubled. This helped to accommodate opposition parties without diluting the range of patronage available to CPDM members. But this expansion also facilitated the incorporation of a wider range of elites who were representative of new arrangements of ethnic identity. Since 2002, a Beti has always been a Vice President (Biya's brother-in-law Hilarion Etong), as have a Bamileke, Sawabantu and opposition member. However, since 1992 there have been two Gbaya Vice Presidents (Théophile Baoro and Kombo Gberi). Similarly, the expanded slate of Questors now includes a Choa Arab (Abba Kabir Kamsouloum), and there have been Kanuri, Masa, Mbum, Tikar and Toupouri Secretaries.

Third, the creation of four new legislative committees simultaneously expanded the opportunities for patronage and diluted the strategic importance of certain positions. The economic affairs committee offers an alternative to the finance committee, since it has influence over the allocation of funds for regional development and the management of public works and parastatals. On both finance and economic affairs, the Beti have maintained a plurality of positions, but business elites (primarily Anglophone and Bamileke) are more likely to be appointed to economic affairs while civil servants are more often

appointed to finance. Similarly, the resolutions committee, which oversees draft legislation and the standing orders of the National Assembly, has become a more important gatekeeping committee and is heavily tilted toward two key groups – civil servants and non-Fulani northerners. On the other hand, the importance of the constitutional affairs committee declined following the passage of the 1996 constitution. A third of the constitutional affairs committee are now senior professionals (particularly legal professionals), and the Beti have no particular leverage. Still, Anglophones remain underrepresented and non-Fulani northerners hold disproportionate influence.

CONCLUSION

Studies of political institutions in Africa have remained heavily lopsided toward the executive branch and the distribution of patronage within cabinet-level coalitions. This study has contributed to emerging work on legislatures in Africa in a number of ways. First, it has expanded the empirical range of examination by bringing in insights from a Francophone majority case. Second, the study addresses a relatively under-studied context where authoritarian imperatives have for long overshadowed democratic tendencies, despite multiparty elections. Third, the use of a biographical dataset has facilitated one of the few longitudinal studies of an African legislature, with close attention to changing dynamics across the single and multiparty eras. Despite important changes, the Cameroonian legislature has not developed significant legislative or oversight capacity. Rather, it has remained primarily a site for the distribution of patronage and a mechanism for maintaining political control. Nonetheless, this does not mean the Cameroonian legislature is devoid of interesting politics.

Importantly, multipartyism has forced the regime to adapt the legislature as a mechanism of authoritarian control. The regime still relies on tried-and-true tools of control like the placement of key allies in gatekeeping positions such as the President of the National Assembly, or demonstrations of ethnic favouritism toward the president's own cohort. However, since multipartyism the regime has also taken advantage of the legislature's capacity to expand opportunities for patronage and diversify notions of ethnic representation. The major regional-ethnic cleavages have been weakened by the elevation of smaller groups, which in turn limits the capacity of potential opposition to coalesce. In addition, the regime has exerted more control over candidate selection and appears to privilege a career pipeline that promotes elites from the civil administration into elected office.

However, the evolution of the Cameroonian legislature also suggests a tension between the imperatives of authoritarian control and the capacity of the legislature to foster new senses of political representation and accountability. In an era of electoral and constituency-level politics, regimes need to nominate legislators with local appeal and financial wherewithal. In Cameroon this corresponds with significant change in the social composition of the legislature, particularly the growth of business and professional elites. Simultaneously, an authoritarian

regime needs assurances that said legislators will remain trustworthy interlocutors, or at the very least non-threatening. Publicly, the Cameroonian legislature shows little signs of assertiveness, even in the face of significant challenges like the ongoing Anglophone crisis. That outcome suggests that these tensions are to some degree resolved. But that does not belie a certain degree of dynamism or internal strain in the relationship between the legislature and executive, which might have an impact on future politics.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X21000288

NOTES

1. The African Legislatures Project (ALP), the largest endeavour for studying legislatures in recent years, has information on Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho, Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Mali, Namibia, Burkina Faso and Benin. However, closer case study work has been primarily occupied with Ghana and Kenya.

2. The dataset drew primarily on a partnership with a key informant in the research arm of the National Assembly who provided access to a biographical publication kept within the National Assembly (the *Golden Book of the National Assembly*). This publication notates date of birth, village of birth, level of education, prior occupation, prior political positions, traditional title and current parliamentary post. Access was also provided to a number of CV records (2002–2019) that provided more detail on key occupational junctures and partisan experience. The dataset was supplemented by secondary source research (e.g. obituaries) that helped to flesh out missing data. While there are gaps, they do not appear systematic but due to record keeping. Information about ethnic identity was extrapolated based on village of birth, surnames associated with specific ethnic groups, and other secondary sources. There might be small errors in ethnic classification, but there is sufficient confidence in the coding to provide the general picture of ethnic representation in the legislature.

3. Under French colonial rule, local legislative institutions developed following the Brazzaville Conference. In 1946, the *Assemblée Représentative du Cameroun* (*ARCAM*) was created as an advisory body. ARCAM had 40 members – 24 Cameroonian and 16 French representatives – all selected by electoral colleges. In March 1952, ARCAM was converted into the *Assemblée Territoriale du Cameroun* (*ATCAM*). ATCAM was expanded to include 50 members – 32 Cameroonian and 18 French.

4. Mbida was drawn into direct conflict with Cameroon's High Commissioner, Jean Ramadier. Mbida had significant disagreement over the rapid pace of independence, the prospect of unification with British Cameroons, pacification with the UPC, and the potentially dependent economic relationship between Cameroon and France. Ramadier helped orchestrate a vote of no confidence and the resignation of several ministers from Mbida's cabinet.

5. This process began in January 1968, when Ahidjo appointed Samuel Tandeng Muna as Prime Minister of West Cameroon without consultation with the National Assembly. In 1969, the right of state legislatures to override the appointment of a Prime Minister was abolished. Less than a year later, Muna was appointed Vice President and the constitution amended to allow him to simultaneously act as Prime Minister.

6. It is worth noting that since 1992 only four bills have been rejected by the National Assembly and seven bills have been withdrawn by the government following parliamentary opposition.

7. The legislature has only used its right to censure in 1958 to remove André Mbida from office. Only two commissions of enquiry have been established – in 1968 to probe the management of the West Cameroonian power company POWERCAM, and in 1992 to investigate corruption in the cellulose manufacturing parastatal CELLUCAM (Ntamack 2011).

8. Divine Ntaryike Jr. 'Cameroonian MPs among country's leading income earners', *Cameroon Post Line* (11.6.2012).

9. The creation of primaries also led to an influx of money during the nomination process. Between 1997 and 2007 there were numerous accusations of fraud and vote-buying during primaries, particularly within the CPDM since nomination essentially means victory in the general election. See the reporting in,

Léger Ntiga. 'La chute Des baoubabs', *Le Messager* (15.5.2002); Staff. 'Investitures: bon nombre de grosses pointures du RDPC n'ont pas passé le cap des primaries', *Le Yaoundé* (20.5.2002); Samuel Mack-Kit, 'Elections 2007: encore une victoire annoncée poue le RDPC', *Mutations* (24.5.2007); Alexander T. Djimeli, 'Législatives 2007: voici les listes du RDPC', *Le Messager* (28.5.2007).

10. Note that this discussion is focused on the CPDM, given their domination of the National Assembly. Other parties such as the SDF and UPC use a primary system while the NUDP and UDC use a centralised system.

11. Circular N 001/RDPC/CC/SG of 9 January 2020 (on the CPDM Electoral Campaign for Legislative and Municipal Elections of 9 February 2020).

12. Up until 2012 an MP could simultaneously hold a role as mayor, which facilitated some degree of political entrenchment. In 2012, Law 2012/001 reformed the electoral code to forbid MPs from holding a dual mandate.

13. These group distinctions are not meant to provide a comprehensive accounting but are based upon scholarly work regarding politically activated identities and major ethnic and linguistic differences in Cameroon.

14. Another possible reason is that the NUDP entered an alliance with the CPDM in 1997. Consequently, as the Fulani have gained cabinet-level representation they have possibly forgone legislative representation.

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