Marginalization: the case of Cameroon

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Marginalization: The Case of Cameroon

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Introduction

The international system has always been heterogeneous; in recent history it has embraced kingdoms and republics, empires and colonies, superpowers and microstates, fascist and democratic nations, integrating and disintegrating states. During the Cold War heterogeneity was less obvious, because the system was divided into blocs: there was a First, Second and Third World embracing capitalist, communist and non-aligned or developing states. Of course, Cold War reality was never quite as neat as the categories suggest, but on the whole the system had a simple structure. Today, heterogeneity is once again in full view; there is more diversity than ever.

The present international system features one superpower, one real hegemon - the United States. In Europe, states are integrating and gradually transferring sovereignty to a supranational actor. In the Balkans and in parts of Africa, some states are disintegrating or failing. In Eastern Europe and in Latin America, there are a number of transition countries moving from authoritarian rule to democracy. The system also includes a handful of terrorist states and, especially in Asia, there are some threshold countries featuring tremendous economic growth. And, finally, there are marginalized countries that are quietly stagnating on the fringes of the international system.¹

Cameroon is such a marginal state. It is small, weak, underdeveloped and heavily dependent. The country belongs to a regional organisation, the Union Douanière et Economique de l’Afrique Centrale (UDEAC), but integration never got off the ground.² For the past ten years, its GNP has sharply declined, and it is far from being a threshold country. Cameroon is not in transition to democracy; there has been some liberalization but democracy is not in sight. Cameroon is not rebelling and has practically given up efforts to change the international economic order in league with other marginalized states. Cameroon is just a docile marginal state - like so many in sub-Saharan Africa.

¹ The term “marginalization” is being used with increasing frequency by various authors and organizations; see for instance Robert Kappel, „Africa’s Marginalization in World Trade, A Result of the Uruguay Round Agreements, INTERECONOMICS, January/February 1996, p.42; Paul Collier, The Marginalization of Africa, Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford 1994.

² UDEAC will soon be replaced by CEMAC (Commission Economique et Monétaire de l’Afrique Centrale), an attempt to promote regional cooperation more seriously; the treaty has been signed, and the new organization should be inaugurated in the near future. For a critical analysis of regional integration and UDEAC see Jürg Martin Gabriel, “Regionale Integration in Afrika: Ein neues Modell”, ANNUAIRE SUISSE DE SCIENCE POLITIQUE, 1974, pp. 43-56.
Scholars of international relations have developed theories to understand the various types of states; the more important and prosperous a state, the more numerous the theories. Much has been said, therefore, on superpowers and hegemons. Colin Gray, for instance, has written on the "geopolitics of superpower", Robert Gilpin on "hegemonic cycles" and Charles Kindleberger on "hegemonic stability". Free trade, interdependence and globalization are interesting topics as well: Richard Rosecrance dealt with the "trading state", Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye with "power and interdependence", and Stephen Krasner with "regimes".3

Ernst Haas has written on the "functionalist integration" of Europe, and Michael Doyle on "democratic peace". Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter discuss "transition", Samuel Huntington theorizes about a possible "clash of civilizations".4 There are no works of such well-known authors which deal with the subject of the forgotten states of the international system, unless we take into consideration the neo-Marxist theory of dependence or "structural violence" as developed over twenty years ago by Johan Galtung. The neo-Marxists emphasize exogenous sources of marginalization and see it as a product of the capitalist world economy. For Galtung the capitalist states are at the center of the international system and cause marginalization; underdeveloped states are the victims in the periphery.5

Exogenous explanations of underdevelopment and marginalization have lost much of their attraction, however, since a sizeable number of former colonies in Asia have demonstrated that, given the proper political conditions, free trade leads to growth instead of exploitation and


shows the way out of material stagnation and misery. The main cause of underdevelopment and marginalization is no longer seen to be exogenous - but *endogenous*. Neo-Marxism is out of fashion\(^6\) - but for the moment there is no major body of international relations theory taking its place. The purpose of this paper is to make a suggestion as to how the void could be filled, at least in part.

Using Cameroon as an example, I shall argue that the main cause of marginalization lies in the near total absence of a modernizing élite or, put differently, in the dominance of a large *pre-modern élite*. According to Axelle Kabou, a young Cameroonian social scientist, pre-modern élites fail to engage in innovative and scientific problem-solving\(^7\) and consequently do not engage in what Karl Popper calls societal engineering and institutional experimentation.\(^8\) Given the fact that Cameroon’s pre-modern élite is practically identical with the state as such, it is only logical that marginalization is ultimately the expression of a *pre-modern conception of statehood* and of *sovereignty*. As Holm and Sorensens have recently shown, it is rather common in the post-Cold War era for pre-modern states to exist side by side with modern and post-modern states.\(^9\) These concepts, as I will show, help to account for much of the new diversity in international relations and are a useful substitute for such outmoded terms as First, Second and Third World.

The argumentation presented here is not entirely new, of course. Some authors have argued all along that African underdevelopment is predominantly an endogenous phenomenon and that "institutions matter".\(^10\) During the Cold War with its confrontation between capitalism and

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\(^10\) One of the most trenchant analyses of the endogenous sources of stagnation was published in 1985 by Richard Sandbrook. The book has been so successful that it is now in its sixth printing. The following is a brief quote summarizing his central thesis:

*We argue... that socio-political factors, in particular, place severe limitations on economic development. Elsewhere the state has played a central role in capitalist development, indirectly through the generation of a conducive framework of political order and rational law and administration, and directly through the provision of adequate infrastructure, subsidies to promising firms and sectors and*
communism, however, these voices were not dominant. The term „modernization“, for instance, became identified with western imperialism, which was one of the reasons why it was replaced with the more neutral concept of „development“. Cultural relativism was en vogue. Today, Axelle Kabou speaks frankly about „pre-modernity“ and the corresponding need to „westernize“. She also wonders whether the teachings of the “tiersmondistes” about authenticity and Africanization were not misleading. Europeans who raised similar questions in the past were inevitably accused of neo-colonialism - or worse. This has changed, freeing scholarly dialogue from unpleasant undertones.

In this three-part article, Part 1 sets the stage by showing how the end of the Cold War has changed Cameroon’s international environment. Part 2 discusses the country’s marginalization based on the argument presented above. The focus is on the pre-modern élite as it operates in the realms of politics, economics and public administration. Part 3 constitutes an effort to relate the argument to international relations theory, i.e. to the on-going discussion of various types of sovereignty and of the new structure of the international system.

1 The Post-Cold War Setting

The Cold War was a time of polarization and of high tension that more than once brought war and tragedy to Africa. But the era also had its advantages. The international system, as already mentioned, was neatly arranged, and countries like Cameroon belonged to the Third World. Furthermore, in order to escape East-West tension, most developing countries belonged to the Non-Aligned Movement. Nonetheless, many felt a need to choose between either socialism or capitalism as a path of development. Cameroon opted for the capitalist way, others for the socialist way. Whatever the choice, sub-Saharan countries occupied a definite place within the global order. At international conferences they tended to vote with one camp or the other.

Another Cold War advantage was that developing countries were often courted by East and West alike. Someone cared, so it seemed. After independence, nations from East and West

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opened embassies in the new capitals, thereby bestowing upon former colonies the recognition of sovereignty and equality. Agencies providing and coordinating development assistance were set up, and acronyms like USAID (United States Agency for International Development) or FED (Fonds européen de développement) became household words.

The United Nations system followed suit. Specialized institutions like the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) or the World Health Organization (WHO) settled in. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) attempted to coordinate the various assistance programs, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) provided a platform from which to negotiate with the North.

Skillful African countries managed to manipulate the various aid donors. The Soviets could be played off against the Americans, and the Chinese at times let themselves be used against both superpowers. Similar strategies were pursued to obtain maximum assistance from former colonial powers. Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, was a master in pressuring the French by courting the Germans, the British or the Americans. For many Cameroonians, to drive a German car in a sea of Renaults or Peugeots was a visible expression of this strategy; even the head of state made it a point to be chauffeured in a Mercedes instead of a Citroën - and to be flanked by a whole series of BMW motorbikes. In other countries the choice was between a Soviet Zil or an American Cadillac.\(^\text{11}\)

With the termination of the Cold War, such games have become pointless. Development assistance is drying up, some aid agencies and even embassies are closing down, and the Soviet and Chinese missions look strangely over-sized and under-staffed - white elephants of an earlier era. The distinctions between East and West, North and South, socialism and capitalism have evaporated, and gone is also the feeling of belonging to a definite camp. The international system is more heterogeneous than ever, and it is difficult to identify with any one group. Sub-Saharan countries are still part of the African bloc within the UN, and they also belong to the Organization of African States (OAU), but they have difficulty relating to EU-, NAFTA- or APEC-members, to transition countries, tigers, NICs, growth centers or threshold countries. The world is not as orderly as it used to be.

Not only are identities blurred, attention is also more difficult to obtain. So many of the new groupings are preoccupied with themselves. Europeans are building their Union, the United States is focusing on Latin America and the Pacific, China is busy promoting growth, and Russia is concentrating on its internal problems. Who cares about sub-Saharan Africa these days? The continent becomes a forgotten place, a huge area on the margins of the international system. If anyone gets systematic attention south of the Sahara, it tends to be post-Apartheid South Africa. For the first time since independence, black African states feel truly on their own. There always was a gap between Africa and the rest of the world, but nowadays it is widening - despite G7 rhetoric and occasional, self-serving Afro-optimism generated by some World Bank officials.\textsuperscript{12}

The economic gap is also growing wider. Statistics show year after year that sub-Saharan Africa is trailing other regions of the world in almost every single respect. The total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of all sub-Saharan countries was in 1994 about equal to that of Argentina;\textsuperscript{13} the per capita GNP growth rate for the years 1985-1994 is negative (-1.2%), while that of the East Asia and Pacific region is a sturdy 6.9%.\textsuperscript{14} It is true that for the year 1996 over-all GNP growth is reported to be 5%, but the increase is generated by the tertiary and not the secondary sector, by agriculture and mining and not by industrial production.

Furthermore, Africa's share of world trade is a negligible 2%, down from 3.5% in 1985.\textsuperscript{15} Foreign direct investment has recently been on the increase, but relative to other regions it is on the decline. The over-all response of foreign investors to recent policy changes has been disappointing, and most investment has gone into extracting ventures (oil and mining) and hardly any into industrial production.\textsuperscript{16} The credit-risk rating is double that of the Asian-Pacific region.\textsuperscript{17} The

\begin{footnotes}{\footnotesize
12 Callisto Madavo and Jean-Louis Sarbib, „Africa on the Move: Attracting Private Capital to a Changing Continent“, SAIS REVIEW, Winter/Spring 1997, pp. 111-126. - At the recently held Denver G7-Summit Africa was discussed, mainly prompted by a U.S. sponsored „Africa Initiative“. This has prompted some media to publish optimistic comments about the present and future performance of African economies; see THE ECONOMIST, 14 June 1997, pp. 13-14.
\end{footnotes}
total debt of African countries is high, and the debt-service ratio is worsening;\(^{18}\) and of all the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) the Bretton Woods Institutions have initiated, the great majority affect African countries. Yet, the population is growing twice as rapidly as in the East Asia and Pacific Region (2.7% vs. 1.4%).\(^{19}\) There is simply no doubt that in absolute and relative terms sub-Saharan Africa is the poverty corner of the world.

This has not always been the case. At the time of independence Ghana and Malaysia, or Nigeria and Indonesia, to name but a few, enjoyed similar economic conditions. In the meantime matters have changed dramatically. Ghana and Nigeria have in the past decade had an annual per capita GNP growth rate of slightly over 1%, while Malaysia and Indonesia enjoy a rate of around 6%.\(^ {20}\) Furthermore, when attaining independence, Africa was largely self-sufficient in foodstuffs, but today it is the only region in the world where per capita food production has declined over the past 30 years. In the past decade, the situation has worsened to such an extent that a growing number of African countries simply cannot feed themselves.

There is also a democracy gap. It is true that after the changes in Eastern Europe there were instances of political liberalization in some sub-Saharan countries, yet democratization did not take place. The over-all pattern of governance has remained the same and is characterized largely by the continued existence of the „discretionary state.”\(^ {21}\) In other parts of the world - in Eastern Europe, Latin America and some parts of Asia - democracy is making progress.

Recently a security gap has been developing as well. A number of African countries are said to be failing. In such states government ceases to function, order breaks down and civil war follows.\(^ {22}\) Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia or Zaire are the most glaring examples - and the international community is increasingly reluctant to intervene. During the Cold War the opposite was the case. World-wide superpower competition made international politics a zero-sum competition; each side was worried that non-involvement would be to the

\(^{21}\) Michael Bratton, „Deciphering Africa’s Divergent Transition“, POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY, vol. 12, no. 1, 1997, pp. 67-93. This is one of the most solid analyses of the question, and the conclusions are sobering.
advantage of the other, a situation that could be manipulated by Africans, although often at high cost to themselves.

The readiness for intervention also decreased after the difficulties encountered in Somalia and with the endless problems in Angola. Now the major powers - and on their behalf the UN Security Council - are telling Africans to mount *regional efforts*, which in effect is a manifestation of growing disinterest. The new trend is blatantly evident in Liberia, Sudan, Rwanda and Zaïre. The contrast with Haïti, located only a few hundred miles off the U.S. coast, could hardly be greater.\textsuperscript{23}

The fact that the *United Nations* is showing less concern is particularly disappointing, since it was this very organization that meant so much to sub-Saharan Africa on the way to independence and during the Cold War. While still trusteeship territories, most of these countries saw the UN as a vehicle promoting independence. When that moment came, obtaining a seat and a full voice in the General Assembly was unmistakable evidence of sovereign equality. They joined the UN in the middle of the Cold War and, from birth, were used to being important, to carrying weight in votes between the two blocs. These days are gone.

Not only is the UN turning its back on Africa, it is even becoming a vehicle for economic coercion. The Bretton Woods Institutions, an integral part of the United Nations system, increasingly intervene in matters of internal African development - a strategy made possible by enormous debts. It has become routine for the IMF and the World Bank to tie African refinancing to economic and even political conditions. These are spelled out in Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which nowadays are the incarnation of intervention and dependence. At the end of the twentieth century, Africa is not only marginalized, it is also entering a new era of dependence. This is a bitter experience for former colonies with high expectations about the positive effects of independence and sovereign equality.

2 The Political Economy of Pre-Modern Elites

Political economy can be variously defined. For the purpose of this article it embraces three components: politics, economics and administration. By politics I mean the process of deciding important questions of public concern by the involvement of voters (elections, referenda), parties (conventions, campaigns), pressure groups (lobbies), parliaments (law-making) and top officials (governmental decisions). Administration deals with the execution of political decisions, with their implementation by public officials and, furthermore, with the administration of justice. A good case can be made for treating the judicial branch separately, of course, but for the purpose of this essay I have decided to discuss it together with administration. Economics, finally, deals with the production and consumption of goods, services and capital - and its goal is to solve the problem of material scarcity.

I shall begin with Cameroonian politics and show some of its strengths and weaknesses. The country's main achievement is that the peace has been kept, its major weakness that, although now a multi-party system, democracy and the rule of law are not functioning. Modern institu-

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tional engineering has so far not been successful in these areas; pre-modern problem-solving is preferred. For ten years, Cameroon’s economy has been in a deep crisis, and although there are some efforts at reform, it is simply inconceivable that the country will soon begin to industrialize and produce advanced commodities for the world market. In the decades to come, technology-oriented management is not likely to appear in Cameroon. One of the main reasons for this is the deplorable administrative environment. The country is suffering from poor governance in almost all realms of public administration. "Institutional tinkering" instead of institutional engineering is the rule; most governmental services suffer from "dégradation" soon after initiation, most programs are stop-and-go, "fonctionnaires dysfonctionnels" are common.25

2.1 Politics

Compared to most neighboring countries, Cameroon is a political success story. Nigeria and Chad have known civil war and several coups d'états; the Central African Republic is practically a failing state where France has intervened on a regular basis; Aequatorial Guinea has experienced brutal dictatorship, a situation that has still not much improved; only Gabon to the South enjoys similar peace and stability. Both presidents that Cameroon has so far had, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1960-82) and Paul Biya (1982-present), have been skillful at keeping an ethnically diverse country from joining the ranks of failing states. Before discussing the problems of Cameroonian politics and the need for reform, let me highlight some of the obvious achievements.

Ahidjo was a master at traditional problem solving: he built up authority and respect, occasionally used force, practiced extensive extraction and distribution, and engaged in skillful personalized bargaining.26 Using these pre-modern instruments, by some experts identified with neopatrimonialism,27 he created a multi-ethnic ruling class that includes representatives from practically all parts of the country. Given the tremendous ethnic diversity of the country - experts

25 For a general discussion of African "economies in decline” see Donald L. Gordon, "African Politics", in April A. Gordon and Donald L. Gordon (eds.), Understanding Contemporary Africa, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO, pp. 53-90; Sandbrook, pp. 112-144 (Sandbrook speaks of „the downward spiral”).


count around 200 different groups - Ahidjo may not have had any other choice; no single tribal group appears large enough to monopolize power. Whatever the reason, pluralistic élite politics are a Cameroonian reality.  

According to Pierre Flambeau Ngayap, who has done an empirical study on the question, there are two levels of élite integration: a "macroéquilibre géopolitique" and a "microdosage régional". At the macro-level, the "présidence", the "ministres d'états" and the cabinet have at all times been composed of representatives of all major regions and ethnic groups. The francophone-anglophone division is deftly bridged by appointing speakers of both languages (which do not coincide with ethnic lines) to important posts. Ahidjo and Biya, both being francophone, have regularly chosen English-speaking prime ministers or vice presidents. The "microdosage" shows at the provincial level, where the more important positions are consciously attributed to representatives of all "départements". Furthermore, and in order to promote integration, regional provincial offices are often headed by non-locals.

This has not prevented both Ahidjo and Biya from appointing friends from their own ethnic group to head some of the more sensitive posts, particularly in the area of security. In contrast to some other countries, however, power in Cameroon has never been monopolized by one ethnic group. Ahidjo was a Muslim from the North (Foulbé), and Biya is a Christian from the South (Bëti), but their tribes always shared power with others. From the vantage point of many critics, the problem in Cameroon is not that one group "has its hand in the public till" - but rather that all of them do! It is exactly this policy which, as I will show, makes the country so resistant to reform.

If tribalism has not driven Cameroon apart, it is nonetheless a most powerful political force. The existing élite equilibrium is real but also precarious, and clientelistic networks with an ethnic

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30 It is therefore somewhat problematic for the United States Government to argue that "Cameroon continues to be dominated in fact by President Paul Biya and a circle of advisers drawn largely from his own ethnic group and from his party..."; see "1996 Human Rights Report, Cameroon", Embassy of the United States of America, U.S. Information Service, p. 1.
base penetrate government parties and companies. Elite pluralism is not spontaneous but enforced from the top downward, which explains the heavy degree of power centralization. As Victor Le Vine says, "political power emanates from the state, which in turn is dominated by the president." From 1961 to 1972, Cameroon was a federation composed of two relatively autonomous parts, one francophone, the other anglophone. But in 1972 Ahidjo abolished the two entities and launched the United Republic of Cameroon. He also established a single-party regime by creating the "Union Nationale Camerounaise", a move that guaranteed uncontested elections at all levels. Aside from that, the party's main purpose was to promote development while guaranteeing national unity.

As Ahidjo used to say, the party embraced all "forces vives de la nation", albeit at the cost of preventing the formation of a modern civil society. To this day, Cameroon has no truly independent intermediary groups, no forceful professional organizations, unions, bar associations or human rights movements. In an important sphere, Cameroonian have not yet experimented with institutional engineering. To make matters worse, Ahidjo also introduced censorship and permitted publication of only one daily newspaper - the "Cameroon Tribune".

In 1982, to the complete surprise of everyone, Ahidjo voluntarily resigned and handed power over to his Prime Minister, Paul Biya. It was one of those rare cases of constitutional power transition in Africa, although within eighteen months Biya had to fight off a dubious conspiracy.

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32 Le Vine, p. 22.

33 Biya changed the country's name back to "République du Cameroun", the designation used from independence to the reunification with West-Cameroon and the instauration of the Federal Republic in 1961. Federalism is a constant issue in Cameroonian politics, which shows in the fact that the newly amended constitution makes provision for the creation of a second chamber, a Senate, intended to represent the various regions more strongly. See also Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, "Federalism as a Model of Political Organization", CAMEROON TRIBUNE, 3 June 1991, p. 9.

34 Prouzet, pp. 327-352.


36 Andreas Mehler, "Politische Hindernisse der Strukturanpassung in Kamerun", in Joachim Betz (Hrsg.), *Politische Restriktionen der Strukturanpassung in Entwicklungsländern*, Deutsches Übersee-Institut, Hamburg 1995, pp. 304-305; on the general issue of civil society in Africa see John W. Harbeson, Donald Rothchild, Naomi Chazan (eds.), *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO 1994; Siegmar Schmidt, *Strukturanpassung und Transitionsprozesse in Afrika*, in Betz, pp. 136-137. As Sandbrook points out, there is also no class base for strong associations; Africa has at best embryonic classes (Sandbrook, Stagnation, p. 68).
and a coup d'état by the Presidential Guard. He handled both situations well and without excessive force.\textsuperscript{37}

Today Cameroon is a multi-party state with dozens of newspapers and contested elections. This was not the doing of the new president, however. He spoke vaguely of more freedom, made the party sound more modern by naming it Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC), but generally he continued Ahidjo's style of traditional rule. It was only after the Berlin Wall fell that demands for greater political freedom could no longer be resisted.\textsuperscript{38} There was a general demand in Africa for more democracy and, as Claude Ake argues, people demanded a "second independence", only that now they wanted independence not from the colonial masters but from their indigenous leaders.\textsuperscript{39}

Events in Europe played a part, yet only indirectly. More important were two other factors: political change in various Central- and West-African states and the ailing domestic economy. As Michel Banock shows, it was events in Benin, Gabon, Zaïre and Ivory Coast that had an impact. In all of these instances people took to the streets and demanded the convocation of "national conferences" to change the political order.\textsuperscript{40}

Cameroonian, suffering from the "crise", were ripe for change. There were stirrings in Douala in February 1990, but the first real upheaval occurred in May of the same year in Bamenda, the capital of the anglophone North-West province, when John Fru Ndi organized a march and founded a new party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). The government intervened, tried to stop the "rebellion", but the dam had burst.\textsuperscript{41} From now on, the foundation of new parties\textsuperscript{42} and

\textsuperscript{37} For more detailed discussion of the transition see Valentin Ndi Mbarga, 	extit{Ruptures et continuités au Cameroun}, L'Harmattan, Paris 1993, pp. 11-26; Samuel Eboua, 	extit{D'Ahidjo à Biya, Le changement au Cameroun}, L'Harmattan, Paris 1996; Le Vine, pp. 20-52.

\textsuperscript{38} Ndi Mbarga, pp. 11-121.

\textsuperscript{39} Claude Ake, "The New World Order: A View from Africa", in Holm and Sorensen, pp. 39-40.


\textsuperscript{41} There were six casualties; see Banock, pp. 37-42; Ndi Mbarga, pp. 122-154; Zacharie Ngniman, Cameroun, 	extit{La démocratie emballisée}, Editions CLE, Yaoundé 1993. For an analytical account of the changes see Andreas Mehlr, „Cameroun: une transition qui n’a pas eu lieu”, in Jean-Pascal Daloz et Patrick Quantin (eds.), 	extit{Transitions démocratiques africaines}, Editions Karthala, Paris 1997, pp. 95-138.

\textsuperscript{42} For more details see Banock, pp. 27-47, 246-248; Ndi Mbarga, pp. 155-242.
the publication of opposition newspapers\textsuperscript{43} was unstoppable.

Today there are \textit{three major parties} and a large number of minor ones.\textsuperscript{44} The President's party, as mentioned, is the RDPC; it has branches all over the country and the central committee, too, is representative of the entire nation. In various elections, however, it has been demonstrated that RDPC's following is concentrated in the South, the East and the Center, roughly the area where Biya is from.\textsuperscript{45} John Fru Ndi's SDF, too, has adherents in most parts of Cameroon but is strongest in the anglophone and francophone West and the Coastal area around Limbe, Buea and Douala. Finally, there is Bello Boubá Maïgari's UNDP (Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès). Its home is the Muslim North, although not entirely. The remaining parties are small, do not count nationally and are purely ethnic.\textsuperscript{46}

The first contested elections were held in 1992. In March there were \textit{parliamentary}, in October \textit{presidential elections}. In the spring elections, the RDPC failed to obtain a majority, 88 of 180 seats, but Biya managed to form a coalition made up of representatives of minor and divided parties.\textsuperscript{47} The UNDP won 68 seats and has remained in the opposition. John Fru Ndi made the

\textsuperscript{43} Today there are about 20 regularly published newspapers, many of them weeklies. Press freedom is not perfect, however. The American Embassy reports that the government "vigorously censors and intimidates the large private press..." and cites various concrete cases; see "1996 Human Rights Report, Cameroon", Embassy of the United States of America, U.S. Information Service, pp. 5-7. The following is a list of the most important newspapers: MUTATIONS (Yaounde), LE MESSAGER (Douala), LA NOUVELLE EXPRESSION (Douala), CHALLENGE (Douala), GENERATION (Yaounde), LE FRONT INDEPENDANT (Douala), THE HERALD (Yaounde), CAMEROON POST (Buea/Douala), and the governmental CAMEROON TRIBUNE (Yaound).

\textsuperscript{44} For a characterization of the three largest parties see Hugues François Onana, \textit{Les transitions démocratiques en Afrique: Le cas du Cameroun}, CEPER, Yaoundé 1994, pp. 59-162.

\textsuperscript{45} For a distribution of votes in the 1992 presidential elections see LE MESSAGER, 15 February 1996, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{46} It is at times argued that the three major parties represent old battle lines between the Bantu tribes in the South, East and Center (RDPC), the Foulbé in the North (UNDP) and the Bamiléké in the West (SDF). That is a gross simplification which overlooks the fact that Cameroon has something like 200 ethnic groups, and that all of these regions are highly heterogeneous. A visit to francophone Baffoussam, the capital of the Bamilékés, will show anyone how divided even these supposedly close-knit people are. John Fru Ndi, an anglophone who prefers to campaign in pidgin and not in French, is admired by many ordinary Bamilékés for his courage, but the élite is completely divided between him and Paul Biya. There is no such thing as a Bamiléké conspiracy against the Bantus, just as there is no Islamic or Northern conspiracy against the Christian South.

\textsuperscript{47} One of the parties to break up was the UPC. The party has a long history. Before and after independence it advocated, in the spirit of Sekou Touré, severing ties with France and following a Marxist path of development. When persecuted by Ahidjo many "upécistes" took to the countryside and started a "rebellion". Finally they were driven into exile and only returned when Biya issued a general amnesty. Exponents of the party made it into parliament, and some were given important jobs in the government. However, quarrels tore the party apart, so that today the once proud opposition group is hardly a serious challenger. For details on the disputes see CAMEROON TRIBUNE, 30 April 1996, p. 1-3, "UPC: exclusions des grosses têtes"; CAMEROON TRIBUNE, 13 May 1996, p. 1-5, "UPC: on nage dans le flou". For more details on the party's history see Jo-
mistake of boycotting the legislative elections, which meant that the SDF was not been represented in the National Assembly from 1992 to 1997. But Fru Ndi decided to run personally in the fall of 1992 against Biya - and almost won. Officially Biya got 40% of the vote, Fru Ndi 36%, Maïgari 19%. Without massive fraud it is fair to assume that Fru Ndi would have won. At least that is the dominant impression in the country, and it has contributed to the "crise" everyone is speaking of.\textsuperscript{48}

The feeling that Biya and the governing coalition are not playing by democratic rules was reinforced by the municipal elections of January 1996. It was the first time in Cameroon history that local elections were contested, and officially the RDPC did well: it conquered 219 "mairies", the SDF 62, the UNDP 29.\textsuperscript{49} The expectation of many was that the freely elected mayors and city councils would finally obtain real power. But disappointment followed: in the larger cities, where the opposition often has its strongholds, the government continued its practice of imposing a presidentially appointed "délégué urbain" who exercises the real power. Once more the impression prevailed that Biya and his entourage were unwilling to accept the people's will. The legal battles that followed only served to confirm that impression.\textsuperscript{50}

The ruling élite did not intend to lose control over major cities. Perhaps for good reason, because the opposition had on various occasions been trying to organize massive urban strikes, called "villes mortes", in English "ghost towns".\textsuperscript{51} In 1991 the action was relatively successful, although accompanied by violence; a second attempt in May 1996 failed, however.\textsuperscript{52} Another reason for keeping tight control over urban areas like Douala and Yaounde is demographic. These cities are composed of six to eight "mairies" that, due to massive internal migration, may or may not coincide with ethnic "quartiers".\textsuperscript{53} Strong mayors are seen as an advantage by one
group but as a disadvantage by another. However, such situations do not prevail in all contested
townships; the tribal issue can serve the government as a pretext for not democratizing.

1997 was another important election year. Parliamentary elections were held on May 17, and of
the 180 seats in the National Assembly Biya’s Rassemblement obtained 109. Fru Ndi’s SDF
participated this time and obtained 43 seats, and the share of Maïgari’s UNDP was reduced from
68 to 13 seats, largely because of the SDF’s participation. Four other parties got the remaining 8
seats. During and right after the elections there were once again allegations of irregularities,
but in general the result appears to be a realistic reflection of the political forces prevailing at this
time.

This cannot be said of the presidential elections held on October 12 - they were boycotted by
SDF and UNDP. As a result Biya won an easy victory obtaining, according to official figures,
92.5% of the vote. Given the high turnout (around 80%), the boycott seems to have backfired
on the opposition parties. This negative strategy came as a surprise to many since, after this
year’s parliamentary election, the SDF made common front with the president’s Rassemblement
in choosing the leadership of the new Assembly. Biya’s party got the presidency and three of the
five vice-presidential posts, the SDF obtained the remaining two. In addition, the SDF obtained
the chairs of some committees. A change of power based on fair elections would be important
for the development of Cameroonian politics. Accepting such a decision implies that the govern-
ing class respects the public will, adheres to constitutional provisions and lives by the rule of
law; it would be a positive signal showing that the discretionary state knows certain limits.

Sociologically speaking, a change of power is not unrealistic because both opposition parties are
composed of numerous people who have once held high office and want to return to power. As
Ngayap shows, the ruling class counts less than 1000 people, and given the regular rotations

of the military conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Penninsula, the government is anxious
not to lose control over important parts of the coastal region. For more details on the Bakassi conflict see
Zacharie Ngniman, Nigéria Cameroun, la guerre permanente?, Editions CLE, Yaounde 1996; CAMEROON
TRIBUNE, 30 April 1996, p. 16, "Bakassi, Yaoundé dénonce une nouvelle agression du Nigéria".


JEUNE AFRIQUE ECONOMIE, 14 July 1997, pp. 34-36.

Ngayap, pp. 13-14; Le Vine, pp. 22-29. It is also quite obvious that Cameroon, like all African countries, lacks
an independent "civil society" from which the power elite can be recruited; see Mehler, Hindernisse, p. 304,
under both Ahidjo and Biya the "élite in waiting" should count no more than a few thousand persons, many of whom are personally acquainted. Together they form a virtual "state élite" who acquired their status and wealth largely by their proximity to power. Unfortunately, this situation also has some drawbacks. While élite members are used to governing jointly, many are suspect of wanting to get back to power to accumulate even more wealth. Some observers wonder, therefore, whether a constitutional change of power would have any impact on bad governance and ultimately on the performance of the administration and the economy.  

Whatever the ultimate outcome of the Biya presidency, it is a fact that Cameroonian politics have been liberalized. If one agrees with O'Donnell and Schmitter that a process of political transition consists of three phases, of liberalization, democratization and consolidation, then Cameroon has successfully entered the first phase. But the country has difficulty with phase two, with democratization. The local press is fully aware of this. A recent headline read: "Multipartisme: déjà! Démocratie: pas encore." It is hardly democratic to boycott elections or manipulate results, to dominate television, to hinder the administration of justice or keep a secret fund of oil revenues. Cameroon is manifestly not a country in transition - for the time being it is stagnating in the first stage of transition.

There is a lack of modern institutional engineering. There is some experimentation with parties and with the written press - but aside from that, traditional politics continue. The power élite would, for once, have to do more than go through the pseudo-modern motion of writing a new constitution, as happened recently. It would have to experiment innovatively with the separation of power, parliamentary autonomy, executive responsibility, administration of justice, implementation of the rule of law, administrative reform and fair elections. It need not happen all at

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58 Schmidt pp. 136-137.
59 Mehler, Hindernisse, p. 305.
62 For a different assessment see Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, L'ACTION, 5 January 1996, p. 12, "1995; la fin de la transition". Samuel Huntington is also far off the mark when, solely based on old GNP statistics and problematic correlations between wealth and democracy, he considers Cameroon to be well on the road to democracy and in the same league as Tunisia, Mexico or - believe it or not - Malaysia! See Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave, Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman OK 1991, p. 313-313.
63 JOURNAL OFFICIEL, 30 January 1996.
once, but one or two decisive steps, initiated by the president himself, would help.

Most observers, and most Cameroonians, are pessimistic. The élite in power is likely to continue problem-solving along traditional lines, by the use of authority, force, extraction, redistribution and highly personalized bargaining. This does not take them beyond institutional tinkering, and for the foreseeable future marginalization is here to stay.63

The only country south of the Sahara being truly innovative and modern, and in the process of transition, is the Republic of South Africa. It liberalized when abolishing Apartheid and introducing the principle of one man, one vote; it democratized when a new constitution was written, elections were held, the old ruling élites put aside and the ANC placed in power. And now, in the process of overcoming its past, it has entered the third stage of democratization - consolidation. No other African country has progressed this far.64 The future will show whether the third stage succeeds.

2.2 Economics

Under Ahidjo the official development policy was Planned Liberalism. As a follower of de Gaulle and of France, the president consciously rejected socialism. Cameroon, in contrast to other African countries, never opted for the neo-Marxist road to development; it was always regarded to be staunchly "capitalist".

That did not prevent the state from being heavily involved in all aspects of development. Until recently, there was a "ministre du plan" drawing up Five-Year-Plans which, among other things, facilitated the flow of development assistance. As Jean-Claude Willame says, planned liberalism "was more a shopping list of desirable public sector investment projects for interested financing bodies and industrialists than the rigorous exercise in integrated financial, economic, and social

63 Médard, pp. 74-84.
64 For an extremely loose definition of terms and a somewhat questionable discussion of consolidation in Africa see Schmidt, pp. 139-146. Ali Mazrui, supposedly one of the great experts on African politics, also talks about democratization in extremely vague terms; see Ali A. Mazrui, "Afro-Renaissance", INTERNATIONALE POLITIK, September 1996, No. 9, pp. 11-18.
allocation it was theoretically intended to be."\textsuperscript{65}

The idea of buying turn-key industries was a substitute for engaging in veritable societal engineering, in building up corporations by systematic inquiry, methodical planning, disciplined organization and empirical testing. The opposite was the case. From Ahidjo’s perspective Planned Liberalism was part of traditional problem-solving, of keeping the power élite happy by the redistribution of extracted money - mostly from oil and aid. As Willame implies, the Cameroonian élite preferred shopping to real development. Consumption is easier than production.\textsuperscript{66}

By such traditional methods, Cameroon set up around 150 enterprises with varying degrees of state participation; in most cases the state owned a controlling interest.\textsuperscript{67} The companies were meant to supplement private initiative or to substitute it where lacking. In reality it frustrated private domestic initiative and often prevented the few truly modern managers from rising. Also, Planned Liberalism was meant to make the country more independent by means of import substitution while initiating the diversification of imports - a strategy that has failed in many parts of the world. When oil revenues began to flow into the state till in the late 70s, Planned Liberalism had its heyday. Until 1982, the state invested heavily in a number of ambitious industrial projects.

When in the same year Ahmadou Ahidjo stepped down and Paul Biya took over, Cameroon had built up a large public sector. The state was the single most important employer; an enormous bureaucracy was in place that was supposed to manage development. Under Biya the policy changed but in name; it was now called Communitarian Liberalism.\textsuperscript{68} The boom ended in 1985 when suddenly, and for a number of reasons,\textsuperscript{69} the economy went into a ten-year tailspin. Although recently there have been signs of modest growth, the crisis is still manifest in many sectors of the economy.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} Fotso, p. 161.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ndi Mbarga, pp. 88-99.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Among other things, the well-known ”Dutch Disease" set in. See World Bank, Report No. 13955-CM, p. ii.
\end{itemize}
Reliable numbers are difficult to obtain in sub-Saharan countries, and consequently it is nearly impossible to characterize the crisis in quantitative terms. When figures are cited after all, they must be accepted with caution. *Jeune Afrique Economie*, the leading French-language publication on current economic affairs, claims that between 1988 and 1992 Cameroon's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decreased by over 20%.70 According to the World Bank, the decline was even steeper. By 1993, per capita income had been cut in half: "De 1986 à 1993, le PIB réel a perdu 5 % par an et le revenu par habitant a diminué d'environ la moitié."71

By early 1997, the situation had not measurably improved. The financial sector, so important for renewed economic activity, is still largely paralyzed. Major banks recently closed their doors or are on the verge of bankruptcy.72 Two years ago, the World Bank assessed the situation as follows: "La moitié des banques, représentant presque 75 % du marché, ont de gros problèmes de liquidités et cinq institutions bancaires, comptant pour plus de 50 % du marché, ont un actif net négatif ou trop peu de capital pour soutenir leurs activités."73 Furthermore, most public financial institutions are settled with so many poor loans that they, too, cannot conduct normal business. The loans are largely those of para-statals, of course.74

From the perspective of entrepreneurs, therefore, the major obstacle to growth is lack of credit.75 Total investment is at an all-time low.76 Private investment, too, has declined77 and where it still takes place, it often emanates from informal sources. Public investment, which in the early 80s averaged 15% of GDP, was down to 2.2 % in 1993.78 Today, Cameroon's rate of investment is substantially below the sub-Saharan average and far inferior to that of East and Southeast Asian countries.79

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70 JEUNE AFRIQUE ECONOMIE (hors série), August 1996, p. 188.
72 MUTATIONS, 30 December 1996 to 5 January 1997, p. 7, "Relance dans la morosité".
The overblown public sector has become a tremendous burden on the economy. Most state and para-statal enterprises are running heavy deficits and are hurting the economy. The World Bank, usually employing diplomatic language, for once speaks plainly: "Les résultats financiers des entreprises publiques on été désastreux... Les entreprises publiques ont saigné l'économie et évincé le secteur privé."  

This had been predicted for some time. The management of most public companies was poor, and particularly the various agro-industrial projects were in difficulty from the start. A number of them never even got off the ground. Insiders knew of the problems, but in the face of optimistic official policy statements among donor and recipient governments, criticism seldom reached into academic circles. Still, there were some warnings. Jean-Claude Willame, as early as 1986, showed that a whole string of Cameroonian para-statal enterprises was in great difficulty and that governmental policy was seriously flawed. More than that, from the start "the decision-making process has been pervaded by a lot of corruption generated at all levels, including the top of the administration, which was highly successful... in keeping government business under tight secrecy."  

Ten years ago, few people passed such harsh judgement - today it is common knowledge, especially among average Cameroonians.

Cameroon was not alone in experiencing such home-made problems. As Jeune Afrique Economie shows, from the early 80s on, most of sub-Saharan Africa has suffered from a severe economic crisis. Cameroon's economy was spared for a while, however, and if the government had acted with more foresight it might have softened the impact. Also, as Michel Banock argues, it

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81 Victor Fotso, one of the most successful Cameroonian entrepreneurs, discusses some of the difficulties encountered when starting industrial ventures; see Victor Fotso, Le Chemin de Hiala, Editions de Septembre, Paris 1994, pp. 159-164; see also Tedga, pp. 160-172.
82 Willame, pp. 111-132; he discusses SOCAPALM, HEVECAM, SEMRY, CAMSUCO, SODEBLE, STPC, SOCAME, CELLUCAM and SONARA.
83 Willame, p. 130. Evidence of the official cover-up was given at the very conference where Willame presented his paper. Wilfred A. Ndongko, then a professor at the University of Yaounde, faithfully presented the official line; see Wilfred A. Ndongko, "The Political Economy of Development in Cameroon: Relations between the State, Indigenous Business, and Foreign Investors", in Schatzberg & Zartman, pp. 83-110.
84 JEUNE AFRIQUE ECONOMIE (hors série), August 1996, p. 188. Cameroon, and all of Central Africa, are still lagging behind, although now terminating the decline; see INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, 11 April 1996, p. 5, "Former French West Africa Shows Economic Revival, Devaluation Helped, but Central Africa Lags".
is simplistic to see Cameroon's decline as a result of developments in the over-all world economy, because for much of the 80's the Northern Hemisphere was booming, and there was spectacular growth in some parts of Asia.\(^85\)

It is true that world market prices for some Cameroonian export crops fluctuated, but that cannot explain the wholesale disintegration of para-statal ventures, many of which have no ties to the world market whatsoever. The decline of Cameroon reminds one strongly of the economic disintegration of Eastern Europe. Oversized state bureaucracies and inefficient public companies can bring down any economy. As the 1993 World Bank report on Cameroon says: "Il existe un rapport direct entre l'importance de la participation de l'Etat et l'inefficacité de l'entreprise."\(^86\)

Given the catastrophic performance of the public sector and the difficulties under which the formal private sector operates, it is no wonder that the informal sector is growing.\(^87\) Whether the sector can be turned into a veritable engine for growth, as Hernando de Soto and the neo-liberals maintain, is questionable in sub-Saharan Africa. Studies that tend to prove his point have been conducted in Latin America, the Middle East and Asia and do not automatically apply to Africa.\(^88\)

The World Bank itself is cautious: "On a pu constater, dans toute l'Afrique, que les entrepreneurs ne viennent pas du secteur informel mais du secteur formel. On ne saurait donc considérer le secteur informel... comme le vivier de futures grandes entreprises."\(^89\) If Cameroon wants to grow and modernize, its future managers are unlikely to emerge from the informal sector. It does not constitute an optimal training ground for what the country really needs - modern management skills.

De Soto and the neo-liberals are right, however, in pointing out that typically, underdeveloped

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\(^{85}\) Banock, p. 28.


\(^{87}\) International Labor Organization, "L'état et le secteur non-structuré au Cameroun", Addis Abeba 1993, pp. 5-6.

countries hardly have a modern economic sector at all. The dominant sector is burdened with restrictive governmental rules and regulations, with the effect that it is more mercantilist, as de Soto calls it, than liberal or capitalist. And, as a direct consequence, the informal sector grows. A dual economy is created, mercantilist on the one hand, informal on the other. This model fits Cameroon perfectly.\(^90\)

De Soto’s neo-liberal recommendations are in fashion. As I have already mentioned, the major opposition party, John Fru Ndi’s SDR, is demanding a thorough liberalization of the economy, but in Cameroon the impetus for reform comes mainly from the IMF and the World Bank.\(^91\) As part of a debt rescheduling effort, Cameroon agreed in September 1988 to a first Structural Adjustment Program.\(^92\) As has become the rule, such programs include commercial, monetary, budgetary and structural measures. Cameroon’s compliance was at first reluctant. For a number of years there was procrastination, and Cameroon was gaining a reputation as a very disappointing "adjuster".\(^93\)

Eventually, however, commerce was liberalized by abolishing export levies and price subsidies on traditional export crops. In January 1994, a much needed currency devaluation took place, and exports have since increased. Budgetary discipline is uneven, but apparently the government pay-roll has been reduced and tax collection improved.\(^94\) Restructuring is proceeding at a snail’s pace; the government initially announced plans to liquidate over 60 public enterprises and to privatize another 100 at a rate of 10 per year - but no names or dates were published.\(^95\) Finally, in 1996 two lists appeared containing the names of 15 companies each,\(^96\) but until recently only

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\(^{90}\) De Soto, pp. 233-310.


\(^{93}\) Mehler, Hindernisse, p. 296.

\(^{94}\) There are major unknowns in government finance, however. The exact amount of oil revenue, for instance, is still one of the best-kept state secrets.

\(^{95}\) World Bank, Report No. 13955-CM, pp. 36-37. For a comprehensive view of the privatization process see L’EXPRESSION, Nr. 2 February 1997.

\(^{96}\) JEUNE AFRIQUE ECONOMIE (hors série), August 1996, pp. 214-225.
a handful of unimportant outfits have actually been liquidated or privatized. In December 1996, at long last, it was announced that a major para-statal, HEVECAM (Société des hévéas du Cameroun/Cameroon Rubber Company), had been sold to an Indonesian Group.  

The impact of these liberalization measures is as yet difficult to assess. Andreas Mehler, writing in 1995, is convinced that the effort has utterly failed. It is too early, however, for a final verdict. The Cameroon government reports 5% GNP growth for 1996, and if the announced program of privatization is carried out, it is bound to have some positive effects. However, SAP assessments in other African countries show that so far the economic and political results are disappointing. SAPs can destabilize governments, as happened in Sambia, but the long term effects are not yet known. Aside from that, as shown above, exogenous stimuli towards modernization are bound to be insufficient. Truly endogenous efforts are necessary.

### 2.3 Administration

The crisis in Cameroon is not limited to state and para-statal companies; it extends to public administration in general, which includes the civil service as well as the armed forces, the police and the courts. These bodies are meant to implement public policy, and the courts in particular are supposed to administer justice and promote the rule of law. It is no secret that in many developing countries these functions are not provided optimally, but in Africa the situation is dramatic. Amadou Dia argues that in sub-Saharan Africa, "the ineffectiveness of the civil service threatens almost all development efforts..."

Cameroon suffers from what can be called a "triangle of poor governance", from the triple evils of excessive governance, bad governance and non-governance. All three are intertwined, but for

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98 Mehler, Hindernisse, p. 295.
101 JEUNE AFRIQUE ECONOMIE (14 July 1997, pp. 34-43) has recently defined an economic rehabilitation program embracing five points, all of which point in this direction.
analytical purposes it is useful to handle them separately.

By *excessive governance*, the sheer size of Cameroonian bureaucracy is meant and, directly related, cumbersome procedures and unnecessary red tape. Many public offices are plainly over-staffed. The general secretariat of the National Assembly, to mention just one example, is packed with clerks that have no work for most of the year and, to make matters worse, the building is a physical wreck. It is true that the country inherited the cumbersome and highly hierarchical French system of administration, starting with the "chef du quartier" and reaching upward via "maire", "sous-préfet", "préfet", "gouverneur", "ministre de l'administration territoriale", "présidence" and, finally, to the "Président de la République" himself. But all cannot be blamed on the former colonial masters, because in France the same structures produce "un état fort" instead of "un état mou". Furthermore, in the last decades hundreds of high-ranking Cameroonian have attended seminars all over the world on how to structure and manage modern bureaucracies - to no visible effect.103

The enormous size of the civil service becomes glaringly visible every evening on national television: endless numbers of "fonctionnaires" are shown to attend pompous functions - usually to install one of their own in a new position. In the days of Ahidjo, such events were usually dedicated to the initiation of a new development project, something that was "shopped" and that quickly degraded. There are fewer projects to inaugurate these days, and the ceremonies now appear to be largely self-congratulatory. Having huge numbers of officials is one of the important reasons for state.

Excessive governance is compounded by the addition of *bad governance*, which embraces both incompetence and corruption. Like many African countries, Cameroon experienced a shortage of civil servants immediately after independence. The Africanization of the "fonction publique" happened quickly, however, but the production of *competence* did not keep up with the rate of appointment. As Willame argues, the deplorable history of state and para-statal enterprise can in good part be explained by sheer incompetence.104 Is it not amazing that an entire generation of Cameroonian engineers and managers trained all over the world, and some in first-rate schools,

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103 Médard, pp. 56-67, 74; the author characterizes the state as suffering at once from "surinstitutionalisation" and from "sous-institutionalisation".

104 Willame, pp. 130-132.
should have performed so poorly?

The situation is worsened by corruption. Private enrichment at public cost is routine in Cameroon, especially now that government salaries have been cut drastically in some instances; university professors, for instance, earn up to a third less. If one is to believe newspaper reports, corruption is very common, at almost all levels of government. Members of the "présidence", ministers and directors of public enterprises make off with large amounts, lowly officials have to make due with small amounts. In order to improve its credibility, the government launches anti-corruption campaigns at regular intervals.

Terms like kleptocracy, clientelism, patronage, patrimonialism or personalization are used to characterize the situation. These imply that the persons involved have difficulty distinguishing between private and public interest, and the consequences for public administration - and for economic growth - are disastrous. Property rights no longer exist when justice is for sale; competition is falsified when money changes hands secretly; importing and exporting becomes expensive, arbitrary and complex when officials can be bought.

While it is true that Asian countries, and particularly Japan, also suffer from corruption, it appears that in those cases the "greasing" of the wheels of government does not seem to coincide with incompetence and hamper growth. In Cameroon, however, one gets the distinct impression

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106 Allegations about corruption at highest levels are common; anti-corruption campaigns are also. Right now the Edzoa Tituts affaire is making headlines. For many years Edzoa was very close to Biya, served as his personal doctor and occupied some of the most influential positions. In April of this year, in a move that surprised everyone, he voluntarily resigned from his post as Minister of Public Health - only to announce that he was running for president... A few weeks later he was arrested. Rumors about improper financial dealings had been circulating for years. If similar cases from the past are a measure, nothing will come of the affair.
107 CAMEROON TRIBUNE, 11 December 1996, p. 16, "Mobilisation au sommet contre la corruption".
109 The Douala Port Authority became so inefficient that the government decided to hand important functions over to the Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS), operating internationally out of Geneva: LE MESSAGER, 2 January 1997, p. 6, "La SGS à l’heure du bilan". As the NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG reports, the port of Mombasa suffers from similar problems and is also being put in Swiss hands, see NZZ, 2 December 1996, p. 9, "Aufräumen im Augiasstall von Mombasa".
that corruption is intimately linked to stagnation. Corruption is always a waste and in the long run can have no place in a modern economy, but it appears to be doubly inhibiting when combined with institutional tinkering.

If Cameroon suffers from excessive governance, it is also plagued by the opposite, by *non-governance*. There are instances where public administration simply disappears - to the disadvantage of economic growth. Officials are unavailable for weeks, either "en mission" (generally meaning abroad) or "en brousse" (meaning outside the capital). In their absence, government business rests. Government performance is often *stop-and-go*, periods of intensive activity are followed by periods of total calm - and neglect. To Sisyphus the local scene would appear familiar: institution building in Cameroon regularly starts afresh.

There is much dynamism while a project is being initiated, and there is even more fanfare at its inauguration, but then "dégradation" sets in. Physical and institutional decay is the rule, regular maintenance is the exception. As a result the country is littered with ruins, with agencies and buildings that have become dysfunctional. I already mentioned the general secretariat of the National Assembly; the Cameroonian Chamber of Commerce is yet another example. Richard Sandbrook characterizes the problem with the following words:

> The omnipresent danger is political decay - a decline in the political and administrative institutions of the state shown through the prevalence of political violence and instability and bureaucratic incompetence and corruption.\(^\text{110}\)

Instead of being systematic, government activity is *intermittant*, *non-sustained*, *disjointed* - no institutional experiment is carried through, tested and amended. In combination with excessive and bad governance, performance is arbitrary and inefficient. Cameroon, as already indicated, is "un état mou", a state whose administration cannot be relied upon.\(^\text{111}\) For the development of a modern economy this is ruinous, because markets depend on a state that is "lean and mean" and officials that are "pur et dur".\(^\text{112}\) The rule of law is a prerequisite for functioning markets, but in a country where the "Journal Officiel" has not been published for almost ten years, the rule of law

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\(^{110}\) Sandbrook, Stagnation, p. 40.  
\(^{111}\) Mehler, Hindernisse, p. 304.  
cannot be said to exist. The World Bank comments upon the prevailing situation in no uncertain terms:

La crise économique et les bouleversements politiques se sont accompagnés d'une crise institutionelle grave, d'entorses à la primauté du droit et d'une impuissance grandissante du pouvoir judiciaire à régler les différends commerciaux. Cette situation a eu des effets dévastateurs sur la confiance des investisseurs privés dans l’économie.

SAPs are meant to combat excessive governance, but the IMF and the World Bank are virtually powerless when it comes to remedying the two other evils, bad governance and non-governance. As Hans Illy argues, meaningful reforms can hardly be initiated by the SAPs under way. In the face of domestic lethargy, exogenous efforts simply will not do.

True administrative reform must come from the inside, as happened in Great Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries. Several reform Prime Ministers turned an inefficient and corrupt system around and modernized it. And, not surprisingly, it was the liberal Whigs who accomplished it and not the traditional Conservatives. Cameroon's experience is by no means unique; the British and other examples show that reform is possible. Administrative reform is intimately tied to political reform of course, and both of them together will terminate the discretionary state. Institutions do matter - indeed.

But, as I have tried to show, pre-modern élites are poor institution builders. Axelle Kabou, in her inconoclastic bestseller, takes African élites to task for refusing to be modern. She argues that these élites must finally embrace science and technology in order to alter and develop their own culture in a creative way. Why not copy what the Japanese did in the Meiji era and make a serious effort to integrate modern science and institutions into a traditional culture? But Kabou remains doubtful because Africans in her estimation reject anything that is systematic, methodi-

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115 Illy, p. 171.
117 Silvio Borner, Aymo Brunetti and Bearice Weder, *Political Credibility and Economic Development*, Macmillan, London 1994; the three authors show that the „discretionary state“ is the worst enemy of growth and that the predictable and transparent enforcement of rules is its best friend. See also Collier, p. 554.
cal, planned and efficient.\textsuperscript{118} In fact, they "hate scientists".\textsuperscript{119} They love to consume the products of modernity but refuse to identify with the machine age and "Fordism" that produces them.\textsuperscript{120}

While Asians acquaint themselves with high technology, African élites are flattered when European "tiersmondistes" introduce them to "appropriate" technologies! It is with equal satisfaction that African élites embrace cultural relativism and the notion of being profoundly different from the rest of mankind. They proudly engage in a romantic search for authenticity, simplicity and purity while loudly deploring the "polluted nature of modernity."\textsuperscript{121}

By rejecting science, Kabou continues, Africans are incapable of developing a modern society; they engage in \textit{institutional improvisation} and produce a deficient state. Governments are short of competent administrators, judiciaries lack judges with professional ethics, and enterprises cannot find managers willing to take risks and to run technological ventures producing commodities and services for the world market.\textsuperscript{122} The few that do exhibit modern professional behavior are hindered by the dominant pre-modern elements.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Kabou, pp. 22-23.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Kabou, p. 85, 97.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Kabou, p. 61-62, 65, 102-103.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Kabou, pp. 55-72.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Kabou, pp. 92-93.
\end{itemize}
3 Marginalization in Context

3.1 Sovereignty and States

Let me now place the argument in a wider context and relate it to the ongoing discussion on sovereignty and the structure of the international system as it has emerged since the end of the Cold War. As I have pointed out in the introduction, the reason sovereignty has emerged - or rather re-emerged - as an important issue in the post-Cold War era has much to do with the increasing diversity of international actors. Theorists are confronted with the challenge of casting the multitude of actors into a new kind of order.

In this respect a publication by Hans-Henrik Holm and Georg Sorensen, two Danish political scientists, deserves special attention. The authors distinguish three types of sovereignty, which in turn relate to three types of states. Furthermore, and this makes the contribution particularly valuable, the concepts are related to marginalization or what Holm and Sorensen call "uneven globalization". Their contribution is a rare effort to establish a direct link between domestic and foreign politics, thereby uniting international relations and comparative politics.

During the Cold War, theorizing in International Relations was dominated by the realist paradigm or, more precisely, by the structuralist assumption that states live in an anarchical self-help system resembling a potential or actual state of war. The paradigm has its roots in the Hobbesian situation and finds its modern expression in what is often referred to as the Westphalian states-system. States in this theory are an ontological given and subject to identical structural conditions produced by the latent or actual state of war. Structural realists, therefore, distinguish between strong and weak state, but aside from that they see only one type of state, only "the" state with one particular form of sovereignty.

Robert Keohane, in an article that inspired Holms and Sorensen, criticizes this monolithic notion of the state and of sovereignty. He shows that the Hobbesian answer, the famous Leviathan, is

123 The term "Third World" itself is being abandoned by an increasing number of scholars. Only a few are still clinging to this notion; some even maintain that it has a future: see for instance Bruno Ortmanns, "Ist die Dritte Welt wirklich am Ende?", AUS POLITIK UND ZEITGESCHICHTE, 15 March 1996, pp. 27-36.
124 Holm and Sorensen, "International Relations Theory in a World of Variation", in Holm and Sorensen (1995).
125 For a classical exposition of structural realism (or neo-realism) see Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International
contradictory: „Hobbes’s internal solution is politically vitiated by the Hobbesian paradox: It is only viable if the ruler has qualities that he cannot be expected to have given the assumptions of the theory.“126 Keohane goes on to suggest that „one way out of the realist trap is to explore further the concept of sovereignty“127.

This is what Holms and Sorensen have done. They distinguish between negative, positive and operational sovereignty. The first two terms they borrow from Robert H. Jackson, the third from Robert Keohane.128 Negative sovereignty, according to Jackson, is a purely legal form of sovereignty existing merely by virtue of international recognition. It permits a group of people (a state élite) to behave internationally like a state but says nothing about their domestic power situation. Negative sovereignty was bestowed upon the newly independent states in the process of decolonization, irrespective of actual capabilities. Negative sovereignty, therefore, is largely an empty shell.129

Positive sovereignty refers to the content filling the shell; it „describes a state that is its own master. It is not totally independent of its surroundings, but it has the capabilities to deliver substantial goods to its citizens... it is a substantive rather than a formal condition.“130 The third type, operational sovereignty, indicates a situation where states choose to limit their legal freedom of action in a process of bargaining with other states. They do so in the context of participating in complex transnational networks and particularly when establishing supranational governance.131

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129 Holm and Sorensen, pp. 195-196.
130 Holm and Sorensen, p. 196.
131 Holm and Sorensen, pp. 196-197.
Based on these notions of sovereignty Holm and Sorensen proceed to define three types of states: *pre-modern*, *modern* and *post-modern* states:

The *premodern state* enjoys negative, formal sovereignty, but it has a limited degree of positive sovereignty. It is the quasi-state as identified by Robert Jackson. State institutions are weak and do not have direct, monopolized control over the means of violence. The state is also weak in economic terms, externally dependent with a low degree of industrialization. Many African countries are examples of the premodern state.

The *modern state* corresponds better to the conventional IR image of the state. The state enjoys positive sovereignty. In economic terms, there is a national, industrialized economy. Antony Giddens’s definition of the nation-state applies to the modern state: „a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control over the means of internal and external violence.“ Japan and the United States are typical examples.

The *postmodern state* is a different specimen. Here the most sacred principle of the modern state, that of sovereignty providing protection from outside interference, has been tampered with. Postmodern states allow outside interference in their domestic affairs because they get something in return: influence on a supranational level of governance. Why is such influence vital for postmodern states? Because previous processes of globalization have eroded actual, positive national sovereignty.\(^{132}\)

According to my opinion these three definitions of *sovereignty* and of *state* are extremely relevant; they explain a great many phenomena occurring in today’s international system. Furthermore, it is useful to tie them to the concept of *élites* because especially in sub-Saharan Africa the relation between élites, sovereignty and the state is a close one. As Axelle Kabou shows, premodern élites are virtually identical with pre-modern notions of the state and of sovereignty. Actually, for Kabou these élites are so crucial that they assume causal weight - a conception that I fully share (see Figure 1).

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\(^{132}\) Holm and Sorensen, pp. 203-204. As a group the three terms appear to have been used for the first time by Robert Cooper who, however, uses them more broadly and not with the same theoretical implications. See Robert Cooper, „Is there a New World Order?“, in Seizaburo Sato and Trevor Taylor (eds.), *Prospects for Global Order*, vol. 2, Royal Institute of International Affairs and International Institute for Global Peace, London 1993, pp. 8-24.
Obviously, Cameroon fits the category of pre-modern states. Formal or negative sovereignty is
dominant, a fact amply visible in the excessive emphasis on the trappings of authority (palaces,
fleets of limousines, uniforms, flags, seals, etc.) and, most of all, the comportment as well as the
lifestyles of the president and his ministers. These symbolic manifestations of statehood are
accompanied by an evident lack of modern substance. Officials „receive“ with great formality
only to handle the relevant „dossier“ with utmost arbitrariness. Cameroon is indeed a *quasi-
state* as described by Robert H. Jackson:

> They disclose limited empirical statehood: their populations do not enjoy many of
> the advantages traditionally associated with independent statehood. Their govern-
> ments are often deficient in the political will, institutional authority, and organized
> power to protect human rights or provide socioeconomic welfare. The concrete
> benefits which have historically justified the undeniable burdens of sovereign state-
> hood are often limited to fairly narrow elites and not yet extended to the citizenry at
> large whose lives may be scarcely improved by independence or even adversely af-
> fected by it.\(^\text{133}\)

The state of Cameroon’s political economy, and especially the growing informal sector, are
ample evidence of quasi-statehood. Small wonder that in its international dealings such a state is
more *dependent* than independent. The deplorable state of public finance alone makes for de-
pendence: in the absence of an efficient system for assessing, collecting, administering, spending
and controlling funds, reliance on outside sources of revenue becomes paramount. It is also
understandable that foreign lenders set conditions - economic and political conditions.

\(^{133}\) Jackson, p. 21.
Quasi-statehood also shows in the abyssmal conditions prevailing in the legal system. A country where the *Journal Officiel* has not been published regularly for decades cannot function as a modern state. With an almost systematic disregard for the written word, the rule of law simply cannot be said to exist. Patrimonialism can do without the written word, modern government cannot.

Only in one noteable respect is Cameroon not a typical quasi-state: the president has managed to keep tight control over the *means of violence*. Right after independence, when confronted with the UPC-rebellion in the Bamiliéke and the Bassa regions, Ahidjo got a solid grip over the armed forces and the gendarmerie, and he never let go. Biya continued the policy, managed to put down a conspiracy by the presidential guard and, most recently, terrorist and secessionist stirrings in the Northwest province.\textsuperscript{134} Cameroon, unlike many other states in Equatorial Africa, is not failing.\textsuperscript{135} In terms of security Cameroon is „un état fort“, in terms of its political economy „un état mou“. In Africa that is no mean achievement.

Although Cameroon is tied into some transnational networks and belongs to UDEAC, the country is, of course, not a post-modern state. The networks have not appreciably promoted mutual interdependence, and the achievements of UDEAC are insignificant. The pre-modern élite stands in the way of closer relations with the outside world. Only post-modern élites are willing to abandon sovereignty and to share it with other élites in a supranational fashion. The functionalist élites of Western Europe are capable of such a transfer; pre-modern élites, by definition, are not.\textsuperscript{136}


\textsuperscript{135} For an article dealing with the possibility of a „slide into chaos“ see JEUNE AFRIQUE, 9-15 July 1997, pp. 22-25. François Sudan, the article’s author, is an expert on Africa and, correctly to my mind, considers such a possibility as rather improbable. Most of all he excludes a „regional domino effect“.

\textsuperscript{136} For a discussion of the importance of élites in the process of supranational integration see Jürg Martin Gabriel, „Funktionalismus - ein Überblick“, Beiträge der Forschungsstelle für Internationale Beziehungen, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, Nr. 8/1996.
3.2 Marginalization and the International System

Let me, in conclusion, focus on marginalization within the context of the international system. The question that interests Holm and Sorensen most is whether the end of the Cold War has produced a new international system, whether there is such a thing as a New World Order. Their answer is no: „What we see instead is a world characterized by regional variation and transnational change, not by one particular order.“\(^{137}\) To characterize regional variation they propose the concept of „uneven globalization“:

Globalization can be briefly defined as the intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations across borders. Globalization is pushed by several factors; the most important is technological change. By „uneven“ we intend to emphasize that the process of globalization is uneven in both intensity and geographic scope, in both the international and the domestic dimension.\(^{138}\)

For Holm and Sorensen unevenness entails the possibility of fragmentation. It can, on the one hand, mean increased integration among the OECD-countries, „yet this process has also involved increasing marginalization of a number of Third World countries or parts of countries. Integration in the core and fragmentation of large parts of the periphery have gone hand in hand.“\(^{139}\) (italics added)

The concepts of „core“ and „periphery“ show that for Holm and Sorensen the international system has two spheres, as it does for the dependencia school and for Galtung. In contrast to the neo-Marxists, however, Holm and Sorensen do not speak of capitalist and socialist states, do not perceive the relation between core and periphery to be one of exploitation and do not suggest that the remedy is state socialism. For them the core of the international system is composed of modern and post-modern states, the periphery is made up of pre-modern states, and the relations between the two spheres are not purely conflictual. Uneven globalization allows for a more diverse pattern of relations. Figure 2 is a graphic representation of this idea.

\(^{137}\) Holm and Sorensen, „Introduction: What Has Changed?“, in Holm and Sorensen (1995), op. cit. p. 3.

\(^{138}\) Holm and Sorensen, ibid., p. 4.

\(^{139}\) Holm and Sorensen, ibid., p. 6.
This is a simple model of the international system but it succeeds in reducing complexity, a basic requirement of any good theory. The theorist is nonetheless tempted to add a few touches - hopefully without spoiling the parsimonious nature of the model. Why not add threshold states and failing states to the picture? Threshold states modernize (and democratize) at a fairly rapid rate, are becoming interdependent through globalization and profit from complex transnational networks regulated by regimes. A number of countries in Southeast Asia and the Far East are typical of this pattern. Failing states are of the pre-modern type and are so weak that they can hardly maintain formal sovereignty. Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire or the Central African Republic come to mind. Figure 3 is an attempt to expand the model of Holm and Sorensen.

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140 Other categories of states could be conceived of, of course. Any number of states fall somewhere between modern and pre-modern states, such as many Middle East states, among them the so-called „rogue states“. As with any attempt at categorizing, grey areas are bound to exist.

This expanded image of uneven globalization is quite helpful in summing up Cameroon’s position within today’s international system. Having a pre-modern political system, marginalized Cameroon is located in the periphery and is flanked by failing states on the one side and by threshold states on the other. If the country slides into chaos it might end up joining other failing states in the region, if it ever decides to modernize it might go the way of threshold states. So far, Cameroon has not become a failing state because two presidents have managed to remain in control of the central means of coercion and to create a multi-ethnic state élite. Yet it is this very élite that hinders Cameroon from becoming a modern state aiming for the threshold. This same élite prevents the country from integrating with other marginalized states in the region, of course.

Relations with the OECD-states at the core of the international system are, as already mentioned, a mixture of dependence and neglect. Dependence has many dimensions; at its heart there is an unequal confrontation with modern states like the United States and Japan or with the post-modern states of the European Union. This shows most strikingly in matters of trade and finance. Cameroon is such a weak and indebted partner that the core-states are tempted to manipulate the country and its pre-modern élite almost at will. Whether they do it unilaterally, as is the habit of France, or multilaterally, which tends to be the strategy of other core-states, is of relatively minor consequence. The relation is always a hierarchical one: strength confronts weak-

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ness, wealth confronts poverty.

Uneven globalization, therefore, contains a *hegemonic* component that Holm and Sorensen do not discuss sufficiently. Several questions arise: What type of hegemony are we dealing with when modern and post-modern states confront pre-modern states? Does the relation more closely resemble traditional colonial hegemony or is it liberal in character? Are today’s core-states by nature liberal hegemons as conceived of by Jerome Wiener, that is, states which succeed in producing voluntary followers?\(^{143}\) We know that liberal hegemons establish regimes and rules to manage complex transnational networks, but how are pre-modern states affected by these rules? We also know that liberal hegemons may intervene militarily in pre-modern states and that, since the end of the Cold War, there is a trend to legitimize such intervention through the Security Council of the United Nations. What is the impact of such interventions on uneven globalization?

Finally, the post-modern states of Europe are in the process of integration, of perfecting the European Union. As I have shown earlier, these former colonial powers are heavily pre-occupied with themselves and with the Union’s expansion into Eastern Europe. But integration affects trade with Africa, and the consequences have been a mixed blessing. Monetary Union, too, will have an impact upon African states, especially on the members of the French-dominated CFA-zone. What are the consequences of this new type of hegemony?\(^{144}\)


Conclusions

Cameroon, it bears repeating, is not a hopeless case. As the World Bank emphasizes at the outset of its study on the private sector, "Le Cameroun est l'un des pays les plus riches de l'Afrique subsaharienne," but its potential is not being realized despite "une main-d'oeuvre relativement qualifiée et dotée d'un esprit d'entreprise remarquable..." Most Cameroonians are busy from morning till night, but business does not get them ahead - they are even slipping. The reason is political: there are no institutions converting the daily efforts of millions into real growth.

Perhaps the state élite is fully absorbed in doing what it does best - maintaining its multi-ethnic composition and thereby preventing disintegration and civil war. True reform might unduly challenge the élite because the subtle equilibrium relies on a heavy dose of pre-modern extraction and distribution. This fear is exaggerated in my view. Cameroon has gone through a severe economic crisis, and the pie to be distributed has shrunk; yet élite instability is no worse than in the past - it is the population that is moaning! It is the incredibly slow reaction to the economic crisis that is hurting national coherence more than the pursuance of reform. The Cameroonian ruling class has been constantly recomposed, and a serious effort at replacing the more incompetent and corrupt elements would not unduly destabilize it. Multi-ethnic politics can and must go hand in hand with the promotion of good governance.

The time factor is important. Change cannot occur overnight, but for the attainment of material well-being a gradual abandonment of patrimonialism, coupled with an equally graduated introduction of modern institutional methods, is required. Ivory Coast, so it seems, has chosen this path. Modernization does not come quickly and it is wrong for modern states to try to impose at once all of their standards upon pre-modern states. That, however, does not justify an almost systematic neglect of modernization.

Maybe the state is the wrong institution to solve Africa's problems, as Jeffrey Herbst has recently suggested, and it ought to be abolished and replaced with other forms of organization. I won-

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der whether this will do the trick. If my experience in Cameroon suggests anything, it is that sub-Saharan Africa has problems with most modern institutions, be they the state, universities or the corporation. If states were abolished the problem would simply be shifted to a different level instead of being confronted. For the attainment of peace and prosperity some sort of organization is necessary, and it might as well be the state.

I wonder, therefore, whether Herbst's thesis is not one more attempt to placate the sensitivities of African élites and to suggest "appropriate" technology instead of "high" technology. If African élites do not decide to end institutional tinkering and learn about engineering, there is no one in the world who can save them from catastrophe. That is why some European governments are reducing development assistance and placing increasing emphasis on disaster relief, which, however, is not a viable route.