

Chapter 2

Political Background

Brief Historical Context

East Cameroon achieved independence on 1 January 1960 as the Republic of Cameroon, and on 1 October 1961 the Southern part of British Cameroon reunited with the East, while the North opted for unification with Nigeria. Both Cameroons then formed the Federal Republic of Cameroon with Mr Ahmadou Ahidjo Babatoura as President of the Federation in 1961.

Mr Ahidjo banned all political parties except his own in 1966, effectively turning Cameroon into a single party state. He merged most of the political parties in West and East Cameroon to form the Cameroon National Union (UNC). In 1972, a new constitution replaced the federation with a unitary state (the constitution has since been revised¹). On 4 November 1982, Mr Ahidjo, who was serving his fifth presidential term, resigned as President and was constitutionally succeeded by his Prime Minister, Mr Paul Biya.

Mr Biya reconstituted the UNC as the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) or Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC) following a coup attempt in April 1984.

The 9 October 2011 presidential election was the fourth since the restoration of multiparty elections in Cameroon in 1992.

Recent Political Developments

Three significant events have marked Cameroon's political landscape since the 2004 presidential election and the 2007 legislative elections. First among these was the establishment of an independent election management body in 2006 – Elections Cameroon (ELECAM). This body was established following demands from various stakeholders including opposition political parties and civil society representatives. While the law establishing ELECAM was passed in 2006², it was not until 30 December 2008 that President Biya appointed its initial 12 members (by Decree N°. 2008/463 of 30 December, 2008).

The appointment of ELECAM members was met with significant scepticism and criticism from both domestic and international actors who were of the view that the affiliation of some of the appointees to the ruling CPDM party marred their independence. Notably, these members publicly declared that they had renounced their membership of the ruling party. It

¹ Law N°. 96/6 of 18 January 1996 to revise the Constitution of 2 June 1972 as amended and supplemented by Law N°. 2008/001 of 14 April 2008 – hereafter referred to as the 1996 law as amended.

² Law N°. 2006/011 of 29 December 2006 to set up and lay down the organisation and functioning of Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), as amended as supplemented by Law N°. 2008/005 of 29 June 2008, Law N°. 2010/005 of 13 April 2010, and by Law N°. 2011/001 of 6 May 2011 – hereafter referred to as the 2006 law as amended.

was within this context that civil society, opposition political parties and other stakeholders called for the expansion of the Electoral Board of ELECAM to include people with no links to political parties. The Electoral Board was thus expanded from 12 to 18 members on 7 July 2011 following a March 2011 Bill. The 9 October 2011 presidential election was therefore the first to be organised by an independent election management body.

The second event that would influence the 2011 presidential election occurred in April 2008 when the National Assembly passed an amendment to the Constitution abolishing presidential term limits. This enabled Mr Biya to run for a fourth term in office in the 2011 presidential election.

In February 2008, Cameroon experienced a major riot which claimed a number of lives; this was the third significant development since the 2004 and 2007 elections. The riots started as a protest against rising fuel and food prices, but were reported to have taken on a political dimension in certain parts of the country. Aside from the fatalities, there were reported incidents of looting and vandalising of property in Douala, Yaoundé and Bamenda.

The Presidential Candidates

Of the 243 registered political parties³, 52 submitted presidential candidate nominees to ELECAM, ahead of the elections in September 2011. ELECAM approved 23 of these nominations and advanced several reasons for the rejection of the 29 cases such as failure to pay the requisite fee and unsigned nominations. Candidates whose applications were rejected had the right to appeal to the Supreme Court.

The 23 approved presidential candidates who contested the elections were as follows (in alphabetical order):

- Atangana Nsoe Simon Pierre – Grand Cameroun (GC)
- Anicet Georges Ekane – Mouvement Africain pour la Nouvelle Indépendance et la Démocratie (MANIDEM)
- Ayah Paul Abine – People Action Party (PAP)
- Bile Olivier - Union for Fraternity and Prosperity
- Biya Paul – Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM)/ French: Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC)
- Dang Esther – Branch for the Integral Reconstruction of Cameroon (BRIC)
- Dzongang Albert – La Dynamique Nationale pour la Renaissance
- Ekindi Jean-Jacques – Progressive Movement (MP)
- Feuzeu Isaac – Mouvement pour l’Émergence et le Reveil du Citoyen (MERCİ)
- Fone Daniel Soh – Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU)
- Fru Ndi Ni John – Social Democratic Front (SDF)
- Garga Haman Adjı – Alliance for Democracy and Development (ADD)
- Hameni Bieleu Victorin – Union of Democratic Forces of Cameroon (UDFC)
- Kamga Hubert – Union of African Population (UAP)
- Lontouo Marcus – Cameroon National Congress (CNC)
- Momo Jean de Dieu – Patriotes Démocrates pour le Développement du Cameroun (PDDC)
- Muna Acho Bernard – Alliance of Progressive Forces (APF)
- Ndam Njoya Adamou – Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU)
- Ngo Fritz – Ecological Movement (ME)

³ According to documents provided by ELECAM

- Njeuga Jean – Cameroon United Front (FUC)
- Nyamndi Dobgima George – Social Liberal Congress (SLC)
- Tabi Owono Joachim – Action for Meritocracy and Equal Opportunities (AMEC)
- Walla Edith Kahbang – Cameroon People’s Party (CPP)

Of the 23 parties with presidential candidates, five parties were represented in the National Assembly: CPDM (153 seats); SDF (16 seats); National Union for Democracy and Progress (six seats); UDC (four seats); and MP (one seat).

The SDF is the largest opposition party. Its presidential candidate, Mr Fru Ndi, who founded the party in 1990, finished second in 2004 with around 17% of the votes. Ahead of the elections, some of the opposition parties threw their weight behind the ruling party’s candidate, Mr Paul Biya; they included the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) and the Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU).