

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**POLITICS OF SECURITY: DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND
NATIONAL SECURITY IN CAMEROON 2014-2023**

DOCTORATE THESIS

Beryu YUNDZE GASTON

**Department of Political Science and International Relations
Political Science and International Relations Program**

JANUARY, 2024

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JANUARY, 2024

APPROVAL PAGE

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with the respect that the study “Politics of Security: Democracy, Governance and National Security in Cameroon 2014-2023”, which I submitted as a Doctorate thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the References. (16/01/2024)

Beryu YUNDZE GASTON

FOREWORD

The success of this research piece is owed to several people whom I appreciate very much. I thank my supervisor, Assist Prof. Dr. Filiz Katman and all the PhD professors of the department of Political Science and International Relations who guided me with passion from the beginning.

Above all, I would love to express my profound gratitude to my family and friends for their unflinching support and love shown to me throughout my years on this program. I want to acknowledge most especially my sister, Marie-Claire Yundze, who was always around to encourage me in every step I took. I remain grateful.

This thesis is dedicated to my father who passed away on the 5 February 2021. His wish was to see me become a PhD holder, but he did not have the chance to witness it while here. My father was a firm believer in education and provided me with all the necessities right from when I started school. He died while I was defending the progress of my thesis in one of the Thesis Monitoring Committee (TIK) meetings. This to me was a sign that he really wanted me to succeed. He would have been the most fulfilled father, but I believe he is proud of me where he is. ADIEU PAPA.

January, 2024

Beryu Yundze GASTON

POLITICS OF SECURITY: DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN CAMEROON 2014-2023

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the effects of national security on democracy and governance in Cameroon between 2014 and 2023. The aim is to demonstrate how governments in a democracy can use national security against democratic and good governance rules for political gains. Cameroon experienced several armed conflicts and political crises in this period and held all its major elections within this period too. These two factors shaped the country's national security, which adversely affected democracy and governance. To demonstrate this view, the thesis employs the content analysis technique to analyze 42 selected government communication documents. Through this, the thesis contributes to the method and understanding of ways in which national security policies affect democracy and governance. Drawing from critical security theories, the research concludes that national security has a direct negative effect on good governance and democracy especially when there is a security threat and elections involved. This is because those in power will use the situation for political gains. Lessened power of the executive and attributed proper independence to the judiciary, legislative and election bodies among other things can create a balance.

Keywords: National Security, Democracy, Governance, Cameroon, Anglophone Crisis.

2014 VE 2023 YILLARI ARASINDA KAMERUN'DA ULUSAL GÜVENLİĞİN DEMOKRASI VE YÖNETİŞİM ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİNİ İNCELEMEDİR

ÖZET

Bu tez, 2014 ve 2023 yılları arasında Kamerun'da ulusal güvenliğin demokrasi ve yönetim üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Amaç, demokrasideki hükümetlerin ulusal güvenliği demokratik ve iyi yönetim kurallarına karşı siyasi kazançlar için nasıl kullanabileceğini göstermektir. Kamerun bu dönemde birçok silahlı çatışma ve siyasi kriz yaşamış ve tüm büyük seçimlerini de bu dönemde gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu iki faktör ülkenin ulusal güvenliğini şekillendirdi ve demokrasi ve yönetimi olumsuz etkiledi. Bu görüşü göstermek amacıyla tez, seçilmiş 42 hükümet iletişim belgesini analiz etmek için içerik analizi tekniğini kullanmaktadır. Bu sayede tez, ulusal güvenlik politikalarının demokrasi ve yönetimi etkileme yollarının anlaşılmasına ve yöntemine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Eleştirel güvenlik teorilerinden yola çıkan araştırma, ulusal güvenliğin, özellikle bir güvenlik tehdidi söz konusu olduğunda ve seçimler söz konusu olduğunda, iyi yönetim ve demokrasi üzerinde doğrudan olumsuz bir etkiye sahip olduğu sonucuna varıyor. Çünkü iktidardakiler bu durumu siyasi çıkarları için kullanacaklardır. Yürütme gücünün azaltılması ve diğer şeylerin yanı sıra yargı, yasama ve seçim organlarına gereken bağımsızlığın verilmesi bir denge yaratabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anglophone Krizi, Demokrasi, Kamerun, Ulusal Güvenlik, Yönetim.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	: All Anglophone Conference
CNU	: Cameroon National Union
CPDM	: Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement
CPJ	: Committee to Protect Journalists
ELECAM	: Elections Cameroon
ESCAP	: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
DO	: Divisional Officer
FP	: Foreign Policy News
H	: Hypothesis
ISF	: Internet sans Frontières (Internet without Borders)
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
MINAT	: Ministry of Territorial Administration
MINCOM	: Ministry of Communication
MINDEF	: Ministry of Defense
NGO	: Non-governmental Organization
MRC	: Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun (Cameroon Renaissance Movement)
NCC	: National Communication Council
NW	: North-West
PM	: Prime Minister
PR	: Presidency of the Republic
SBBC	: Stop Bla Bla Cam

SCNC : Southern Cameroons National Council
SDF : Social Democratic Front
SDO : Senior Divisional Officer
SW : South-West
UC : Union Camerounaise
UN : United Nations
UNHCR : United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPC : Union des Populations du Cameroun
WWI : World War I
WWII : World War II

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I. INTRODUCTION

The question of balancing national security and democracy remains complex as it affects both advanced and growing democracies. Security scholars have attempted explanations to how each affects the other but fall short of defining the place of democratic governance in times of insecurity. According to Fierke (2017), the existence of a threat or security risk often calls for an emergency reaction and therefore a suspension of regular political operations. In such situations, the use of extreme measures is habitually adopted by governments with the justification of blocking the threat or the need for survival (Newman, 2010). In so doing, elites often broke free of the rules that would normally constrain their actions and force them to respect democratic principles. According to Browning and McDonald (2013) critical security studies fail to define the place of democratic governance in issues of security because they generalize security claims and fall short of providing complex assessments of the ways in which security is established and contested in specific social, historical, and political contexts. In other words, examining individual cases can improve the understanding of the politics and ethics of security.

According to Neocleous (2008), security has been made the topmost political concern and interest over all other interests across the various state interests in recent times. This suggests that there are high stakes for both politicians and the military involved in this sector. According to Neal (2016), politicians were formerly excluded from security issues because it was considered a military sector, but today, professional politicians are involved in all aspects of security. To him, security is no longer “anti-politics” but has become politics itself. Conversely, Bove et al. (2020) contend that the rise in terrorist activity has forced the military into political and decision-making roles. According to their claims, military involvement in politics poses a danger to the delicate balance between the military and civil society. This they say is because it makes it harder for civilians to exercise authority over the armed forces, hence risking the functioning of democracy. In this context, Finer (1975) asserts that the military in politics often utilizes its advantage of having

weaponry to dominate politicians through blackmail or by influencing nominations to positions that benefit them directly. In this light, Piplani and Talmadge (2016) notes that the likelihood of military involvement in politics increases with an internal threat as opposed to a foreign threat.

According to the Copenhagen School, securitization differs from regular politics because security issues are not discussed in public or made a subject of public choice. To this, Fierke (2017) adds that securitizing an issue gives leaders the exclusive authority to decide on it without democratic supervision or restraint. This to her may be an effective way of silencing dissents. More so, besides the absolute power security offers to the deciding actors over citizens, Stohl (2008) and Kaldor (2011) adds that security threats increase military budgets and incentives. Thus, with political and material benefits for both politicians and the military, there is an increased likelihood that democracy and good governance could be affected by security given the priority of interest.

Democracy offers certain rights and freedoms to individuals, but when these rights are infringed in the name of national security, its effectiveness is questioned. According to Kaldor (2011), Sprout (2008) and Neocleous (2008), various governments argue that limiting citizens' rights in times of insecurity is necessary for their security and the preservation of democracy. While security remains a major concern in every society, the problem arises when the security measures target individuals or groups, or when the measures are seen to benefit the party in power or government in place. Thomas Hobbes (1651), though advocating for power to be centered on the Leviathan noted that the security he would provide could become tyrannical and a form of insecurity itself. Nevertheless, he insisted that this was better than the insecurity that would result from statelessness. However, when interest is involved, it is hard to tell if the security provided by the government is beneficial to the people or even better than the insecurity caused by adversaries.

This thesis examines how the Cameroon government's approach to the security crises in the country between 2014 and 2023 affected its democracy and governance. The case of Cameroon was chosen because the security challenges and government solutions gave a good premise to demonstrate the relation between national security, democracy, and governance. Since 2013, Cameroon has witnessed multiple crises that have threatened its national security. The Nigerian terrorist

organization Boko Haram launched numerous deadly attacks on the northern part of the country in 2013 and the military has since been combatting the group. While the assaults were slowed down in 2015, an Anglophone uprising broke out in 2016 and remained a major national security challenge in 2023. It morphed from protests to an armed conflict in 2017. In addition, the 2018 post Presidential election protests launched by the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) added to the list as another threat. Since 2018, the party has been protesting over different issues, often through street protests. More so, there have been threats on the eastern border with the Central African Republic from rebels who cross into the country to launch attacks on security forces and the population. These threats forced the government to take several security and administrative measures. However, these security concerns coincided with the different major elections in the country starting with the Senatorial and Presidential elections in 2018, the Legislative, Municipal and Regional elections in 2020 and the 2023 Senatorial elections. The security solutions taken by the government are seen to have largely hampered the opposition in these elections, especially in the conflict zones. Meanwhile, the ruling party made massive strides in these elections and established a near one-party rule. The security approach has also been said to come at the detriment of basic rights and the people's freedoms (Human Rights Watch 2020, Amnesty International 2021).

The Constitution of Cameroon describes the country as a democratic and decentralized country (Article 1.2). In effect, it provides freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and other civil liberties and human rights. More so, it provides for the rule of law and designates the people as the sovereign with the power to select those to manage the state (Article 2.1). This latter part ties in with the basic definition of democracy as "government of the people, by the people, for the people" (Lincoln 1863). However, it raises the question of who the people are in a case where citizens are protesting the government. The various definitions of democracy center around the people but the management of power puts the place of the people into doubt especially on security concerns. In this context, Lijphart (1999) highlights the problem of priority in the situation of the people versus the government and challenges whether a chosen number of persons, particularly under the majoritarian form of democracy, can adequately represent the people's goals in such instances. This brings to the fore the dilemma of balancing security and

democratic governance. Previous studies have shown that Cameroon has had a hard time applying democracy though it has been able to put in place democratic institutions (The economist 2019, Nik 2014, Cheeseman 2015). Advocacy for democracy in the country in the early 1990s was met with brutal force from the government which had enjoyed a one-party system since 1966 (Morse 2017, Amin 2012, Awasum 2000). Some scholars argue that prior to the introduction of democracy and after, Cameroon has approached security issues or protests with coercive force, which has in turn affected freedoms (Atangana 2010, Dielitch 2002). This thesis argues that the presence of various security threats and elections in Cameroon between 2014 and 2023 amplified the effects of national security on democracy and governance as the insecurity gave government more power over the people.

The thesis will focus on the Anglophone and MRC crises because they animated this period. Prior to the armed conflict in the Anglophone regions, Anglophones had staged a series of protests in 2016 claiming marginalization by the government and calling for a return to the 1961 federal form of state. Anglophone Cameroon (formerly British Southern Cameroon) in 1961 merged with the Republic of Cameroon to form the present Cameroon. Both parties agreed on a federal form of state that was changed to a unitary state in 1972 removing the federal borders and Anglophone autonomy (Fonchingong 2005, Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997). The 2016 protests were met with a violent military response that led to deaths in some areas of the regions (Amnesty International 2021). The MRC post-2018 presidential election protests were also met with brutal force and administrative bans. Thus, this thesis seeks to examine the link between national security, democracy, and governance by answering the questions: How does national security affect democracy and governance in Cameroon?

Chapter 2 explores the literature on Cameroon's national security approach, democracy, governance, and the rule of law. It also establishes the background to the Anglophone problem. It mainly looks at how Cameroon has approached national security issues vis-à-vis democratic freedoms and how the various governments have been able to exploit the use of force and power for political gains. Chapter 3 develops a conceptual framework that will guide the analysis and understanding of the link between the various variables. It also examines the literature on critical

security theories and concepts and connects them to the analysis and the conceptual framework. Critical security theories backup the conceptual framework. This chapter also explores the literature on democracy and governance and examines some major democracy indexes. This is to understand the context of democracy in Cameroon. Chapter 4 analyzes the themes generated from the content analysis technique and draws the link between national security, democracy, and governance. Chapter 5 is the conclusion that summarizes the research and gives recommendations.

A. Topic

National security is supposed to assure the well-being of every citizen as well as the security of his or her property. However, when governments use security for political gains, the measures become unsafe for citizens. The research evaluated PhD and master's thesis in Türkiye and elsewhere and found out that much has been done on democracy, governance, and security, but none has investigated the relationship between the three from the angle of this thesis.

Mokam (2012) in his PhD dissertation argues that Cameroon since 1966 has been searching for its own unique model of democracy based on a one-party system. According to him, multipartyism was forced on Cameroon in 1990 and the country adjusted the old system to accommodate the one-party model, hence, the domination of the ruling CPDM that was formerly the national party (Mokam, 2012: 106). This is convincing enough to assume that the domination of the CPDM is an easy task for the government. This is not really the case because the party still must compete in elections to win. Though Mokam demonstrates that the party uses scrupulous ways to retain power, he doesn't include how it uses security. This thesis will thus fill this gap by showing how the government uses national security to retain power.

Eyong (2017) in his master's thesis focuses on the major security threats in Cameroon. He argues that if the threats are not well handled by the Cameroonian government, they may have a wider effect on the Central African region (p xiii). He approaches security from Buzan's view that the concept is not only limited to military threat but to social, economic, political, and environmental threats. Thus, this view shifts from that of this thesis, which focuses on the military and political threats. Nevertheless, he does not create a link between these threats and democracy, which is the focus of this thesis. This thesis will thus complete this gap by

demonstrating how the government uses these threats to retain power.

B. Aim/Importance

The thesis aims to establish ways in which national security can be distorted in the practice of politics and to demonstrate how governments in a democracy can use national security against democratic and good governance rules for political gains. The results of this study show how national security can be a hindrance to democracy and good governance and once established, will contribute to shaping policies and laws that strike a balance between national security, democracy, and governance. Governments need to be checked even in times of crisis especially if their actions are limiting the freedoms and rights of the people. This study aims to shine a light on the loopholes in security measures, which may act as guidelines to enacting new laws. The thesis argues that national security can be detrimental to the practice of democracy and good governance because governments may use it for political gains rather than for the purpose of securing the people.

C. Research Question

How does national security affect democracy and governance in Cameroon?

D. Hypothesis

H0 – National security has no effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

H1 – National security has a positive effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

H2 – National security has a negative effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

E. Methodology

The qualitative research method, specifically the case study method, was used. According to Sturman (1997: 61), a case study is “a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon”. Simons (2009) on her part

defines it as “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program, or system in a ‘real life’” (in Starman, 2013: 32). Besides the case study method, the qualitative content analysis technique was also used for analysis. Mayring (2000) describes content analysis as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000: 2). On his part, Krippendorff (1989) sees content analysis as that which “seeks to analyze data within a specific context in view of the meanings someone, a group or a culture attribute to them” (Krippendorff, 1989: 403).

The case study method gives the research the advantage to show practical ways in which the subject in question exhibits itself. Stake (2005: 443) notes that a case can be studied analytically, holistically, hermeneutically, culturally, and by mixed methods, but the focus remains on the selected case. In the same vein, Thomas (2011: 512) adds that the method used does not define a case study but what matters is how the analysis differentiates the case from similar cases. The case of Cameroon has much to contribute to the subject in that it carries all the components needed to explain this phenomenon. Content analysis on its part allows the study to break down the various written material surrounding the subjects. According to Krippendorff (1989), data appropriate for content analysis is text which meaning is conventionally attached to. This he says could be verbal, discourse, written documents, or visual representations. He adds that besides mass media which captures all the fore mentioned fields, data that is less public like personal letters, disarmament negotiations, witness accounts in courts, etc., can also be used.

Qualitative content analysis provides the equipment to analyze available data and answer the questions posed by this research. Qualitative content analysis was chosen because it has several advantages compared to other techniques and it fits in with the nature of data available for this research. First, content analysis deals with written and audio-visual communication that can be in the form of books, newspapers, communiques, radio and television content, speeches, internet publications and others. This immediately gives the advantage that these resources can be easily accessed, most times with less cost. In terms of structure, Dixon (2008) posits that content analysis ensures that all units of analysis get the same treatment

and gives objectivity to the process regardless of who is performing the analysis, at what place and what time (p 404). Furthermore, he argues that this technique “allows researchers to establish their own context for inquiry, thus opening the door to a rich repertoire of social scientific constructs by which texts may become meaningful in ways that a culture may not be aware of” (p 404). In other words, content analysis allows a researcher to study social behavior without influencing it. In Krippendorff ‘s (2004: 18) view, content analysis provides new insight, increases a researcher’s understanding of phenomena, or informs practical actions. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) on their part argue that the technique is outstanding because it gives the opportunity for researchers to examine and expound on earlier social activities through documents and records accrued over centuries. Conversely, Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) also think that content analysis has certain disadvantages. Amongst them are that the technique is limited only to recorded information. In their opinion, researchers only have access to information that has been made public, which in most cases does not give the complete picture of what is researched. They further note that internal validity is based on the fact that other researchers will use the given data in the same way. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, this technique still offers a good platform to analyze the data available for this research. It will be within this framework of qualitative content analysis that this piece of research will be carried out.

In this light, both primary and secondary sources were used. Thus, data was obtained for the most part from the internet and government bureaus. This included official statements from the Presidency of Cameroon and ministries, official communiques from other competent institutions, legislations, interviews by ministers and other government representatives, statements from the opposition and civil society. Secondary sources include academic journals, books and other relevant online sites that could be accessed. Other sources of up-to-date information like TV, radio, newspapers, social media, and online blogs were also exploited. Most primary sources were those published in newspapers, online or screened on TV as well as those announced on radio. Other documents were obtained from the state institutions’ websites and other social media platforms. Thus, document analysis methods were used in gathering data.

1. Data Collection

Data directly linked to national security, democracy, and governance was selected. Documents selected were released by the government, political parties, and civil society organizations in relation to the Anglophone crisis, the Boko Haram insurgency and the 2018 post-electoral crisis; all of these within the period of 2014-2023. Government documents were selected for the most part because they are the ones managing power. The period 2014-2023 was selected because the crises under observation happened within this period. Also, the infamous law on terrorism was enacted within these years. Other documents selected that date beyond this period are those relevant to the analysis, for example, the constitution, the penal code, and the electoral code.

The communication offices of Elections Cameroon (Elecam) in Yaoundé, Buea and Bamenda were contacted for election results. Some results were obtained from the Yaoundé and Bamenda bureaus. Other results were taken from the state-owned newspaper *Cameroon Tribune*. The various election results used in the thesis are the results released by Elecam. This is worthy of mention because the 2018 post-electoral crisis was caused by a claim from the MRC party that they had won the elections and had different results from those published by Elecam.

Furthermore, other documents were obtained from the official websites and social media accounts of the various government institutions and departments. Sixteen (16) documents were downloaded from the Facebook account of the Ministry of Communication (Mincom), six (6) from the Facebook account of the Ministry of Territorial Administration (Minat), seven (7) from the official website of the Presidency of Cameroon, three (3) from the Facebook accounts of the Ministry of Defense and one (1) from the Facebook account of the Anglophone General Conference (AGC). Others were collected through WhatsApp from several journalists covering the events. These documents are those that are published either on TV or radio by the various bodies listed above. In all, 42 communiqués and speeches were selected from the government, two (2) from the opposition and two (2) from the civil society. The constitution and penal code of the country were also examined. Two (2) newspapers: *The Guardian Post* and *The Post* were also examined to balance some arguments.

2. Data Analysis

The selected documents were studied closely to identify and select themes. The themes could be words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole document. Themes were selected based on the frequency of words, phrases, or sentences. The words or phrases were then grouped by their nearness in meaning to form themes. These themes were further grouped based on the larger connotation denoted by these words to form the units analyzed in chapter four. The themes arrived at appeared in more than half of the documents selected. Furthermore, the thesis used research questions from Freedom House on the measure of democracy and governance to establish the effects of national security on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

II. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK: UNIFICATION TO STATE BUILDING PROJECT IN CAMEROON

This section looks at the formation of Cameroon and the literature on how the various governments have approached security, democracy, and governance. It also gives background to the Anglophone Problem and how it morphed into a major crisis/conflict in 2016.

A. Brief History of Cameroon

Cameroon was formerly home to several small separate ethnic groups. When the Germans arrived in 1884, they negotiated treaties with the coastal chiefs, which served as the impetus for the creation of a colony (Kamerun under German rule). The land was later divided between the British and French as protectorates of the League of Nations (later, United Nations Trust territories) after the German defeat in the First World War (Fanso 1989; Konings 2002). The British annexed the portion to its neighboring colony of Nigeria, while the French grabbed around 80% of the territory. Britain in turn separated its part into British Northern Cameroon and British Southern Cameroon and connected them to the Northern and Eastern regions of Nigeria, respectively. Natives of British Southern Cameroon's exerted political pressure that resulted in the creation of a quasi-region in 1954 and a full territory independent of Nigeria in 1957 (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003; Mbuagbaw et al. 1987). By using the indirect rule strategy, the British upheld the people's traditions and customs by ruling via the tribal chiefs. In contrast, the French, like the Germans, managed the region on their own while working with a few specially chosen native chiefs. The territories remained under British and French control from 1919 to January 1, 1960, when the French granted French Cameroon its independence. British Northern and Southern Cameroons were given the option to join either French Cameroon or Nigeria in a UN plebiscite in 1961. British Northern Cameroons decided to join the Federal Republic of Nigeria, whereas British Southern Cameroons elected to join French Cameroon. The two merged Cameroons chose a

federal form of government that was in place from 1961 to 1972 before being replaced by a unitary state by a popular vote. The country made English and French the official languages and preserved the legal and educational systems that were inherited from the British and French. The name of the nation was changed from The United Republic of Cameroon to The Republic of Cameroon by President Paul Biya in 1984, and the form of state was altered from centralized to decentralized in 1996.

1. Unification, Project of State Building, and the Anglophone Problem

Besides merging the French and English cultures brought by both parties in the union, the new country also had the task of incorporating the over 200 tribes that make up the nation. This cultural and ethnic diversity according to Eyoh (1998), Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003), allowed Amadou Ahidjo, the union's first president to enact authoritarian control as the dominant locus of power. Mbuagbaw et al. (1987) and Eyoh (1998) claim that Ahidjo used the wars and instability in other African nations at the time to defend the establishment of authoritarian authority. According to Ahidjo, ethnic strife was a major contributing factor to these wars and a centralized government could prevent it in Cameroon. However, the authoritarian approach, according to Konings (2001) and Fonchingong (2005), led to significant unrest, particularly among Anglophones, who began to feel less Cameroonian especially with the dissolution of the federal system that was the basis of the union.

Federalism is described as "...the desire of people to form a union without necessarily losing their various identities" (Elaigwu and Orunsola, 1983: 282). The transition of Cameroon from a federal to a unitary state in 1972, according to Eyoh (1998) and Fonchingong (2005), marked a turning point in the country's state-building process. Turning event because it increased the authority of the central government over the Anglophone area and reduced their ability to assert their identity. In addition, Konings (2001) and Page et al. (2010) claim that Biya's 1984 name change from The United Republic of Cameroon to The Republic of Cameroon was just a continuation of the assimilation of Anglophones into the French system. Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997) support this viewpoint by pointing out that the union of French Cameroon and Southern Cameroon did not guarantee an equal partnership or the preservation of each region's cultural heritage and identity, but rather served as a transitional stage before the Anglophone region was fully assimilated into a highly centralized, unitary state. Eyoh (1998), however, argues that the name change was

intended to create a new country that was devoid of the two main identities: Anglophone and Francophone.

Ahidjo had encouraged a regional based type of governance that tried to include people based on their tribes and regions (Fonchingong, 2005). Paul Biya continued this project when he came to power and even straightened it when he introduced multipartyism in the 1990s. According to Page et al. (2010), regionalism played a big role in bringing identity to the surface which today remains a point of conflict in the country.

In addition, the political liberation in 1990 gave way for the formation of Anglophone groups that strived to restore the dying identity. One of the major political parties formed by mostly Anglophones was the Social Democratic Front (SDF), which became the leading opposition party in the country until 2018 when it ranked 4th in the presidential elections. In 1995, a separatist group known as the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) was created to advocate for what they called the “restoration” of the state of Southern Cameroons. Like the SDF, the formation of the SCNC was met with brutality from the government. According to Jua and Konings (2004), separatist groups like the SCNC petitioned the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations severally, claiming self-rule. In their view, the union had failed, and they needed to separate or return to the two-state federalism, as was the case between 1961 and 1972. However, other groups like the SDF advocated for a four-state federalism nevertheless with the restoration of the state of West Cameroon. In the ongoing conflict, Anglophones now have diverse opinions. While some are fighting to separate, others are asking for a federation and others for decentralization as proposed by the government.

2. The Unitary Project

Prior to the union with Southern Cameroon, Ahidjo had started a project to unify Francophone Cameroun and construct a national identity. According to Stark (1980), Ahidjo's speeches from the time he became Prime Minister (PM) of French Cameroon in 1958, were dominated by two themes: national unity and national construction. Likewise, Biya's speeches especially from 2016 were dominated by national unity, one and indivisible Cameroon, living together, and territorial integrity. At the Union Camerounaise (UC) party congress in Ebolowa in 1962,

Ahidjo as party head noted in his speech as given below (Stark, 1980: 279):

“National unity therefore is the essential objective of the hour, the duty to be done before we can consider ourselves sons of the Cameroon Fatherland. No obstacle, no material, sentimental or ideological considerations should be allowed to bar the road to national unity... We have the duty to style certain sentiments in order to fight the necessary battle, in order to establish this union of hearts and minds right from the base... National unity means that in the work-yard of national construction, there is neither Ewondo nor Douala, Bamileke nor Boulou, Foulbe nor Bassa; we are one and all, simply Cameroonians... Nevertheless, Cameroon tribes are realities, but they are realities into which the leaders of the party or of the state should search very diligently for those characteristics most calculated to help in integrating the tribes one into the other, in merging them together, in order to hasten national unity”.

From this speech, it can be understood that Ahidjo’s idea of unification with the Southern Cameroons was to create a synchronized Cameroon with a single identity. Thus, the 1961 federal republic as he later noted was a first step to the Anglophone integration. After he succeeded in creating a one-party state in 1966, Ahidjo immediately moved to the third phase which was the unitary state. To do this, he argued that federalism was costly and cumbersome and was hampering the nation's development efforts. In effect, besides the two state assemblies and House of Chiefs in West Cameroon, the two states had different agricultural and urban planning policies that were not coordinated. More so, up until 1972 multiculturalism and bilingualism were only fostered at the federal level and the federated states had made little or no progress in these areas (Chem-Langhëë, 1995: 23). Ahidjo therefore believed these could be fixed under a centralized unitary system.

Paul Biya who was part of Ahidjo’s administration since 1962 continued to the next phase of the project in 1984 when he changed the country’s name from The United Republic of Cameroon to the former French Cameroon appellation - The Republic of Cameroon. According to him, the move was aimed at solidifying unity and giving Cameroon a single identity. In 1996, his government adopted decentralization against federalism that Anglophones demanded after the All-Anglophone Conferences in 1993 and 1994. In Biya’s view, decentralization was the most appropriate form of governance to enhance national unity and development. In

2017, he created the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism to ensure equality of both national languages. Like Ahidjo, Biya (2016) believes national unity can only be ensured in the context of a strong unitary state:

“All Cameroonians, without exception, have embarked on building a united, inclusive, and bilingual nation. This is a unique experience in Africa. Like any human endeavour, our experience is not perfect. There are aspects that can be improved. We should therefore listen to each other. We should remain open to constructive ideas, to the exclusion, however, of those that would affect the form of our State”.

Thus, French Cameroon administrators had a completely different view from the expectation of Anglophones as Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997), Fonchingong (2005) and Eyoh (1998) amongst others have rationalized. This conflict in ideas and views led to the 2016 Anglophone protests that started with Anglophone lawyers and teachers and later morphed into an armed conflict. The next sections will explore the literature on how the government handled the Anglophone Problem over the years until the outburst of protests in 2016. The sections also look at how the government has handled national security, democracy, and governance prior and in this period.

B. Manipulating Situations for Political Gains

The first multiparty elections were organized in Cameroon in 1992 and Paul Biya was declared winner. He has won every presidential election since then while his party the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) has also won almost every seat in both the senate and parliament since 2002. Many scholars believe that Biya and his party won these elections through coercion and rigging. Takougang (2003) argues that the 2002 municipal and legislative elections were tailored to favor Biya and his party the CPDM. In the elections, the CPDM won 149 seats out of 180. Takougang claims that even the government was embarrassed with the results and instructed the state media and other media organs loyal to the government to insist on the fairness of the elections in their report (2003: 424). In favor of this assertion, Kah Wallah, the first woman to run for elections in Cameroon in an interview with FP said that “in electoral dictatorships, the opposition is running against the incumbent, his party, the civil service, the state media, and even most of

the private media, which tend to be run by party cadres, as well as the armed forces” (O’Donnell and Gramer (FP) 2018). By electoral dictatorship, she was referring to the Biya regime according to the news outlet. This shows the method of operation that has kept the regime in power for 41 years and counting. Though the regime supporters always claim that every election has been fair and transparent, there is usually widespread disapproval from the opposition and civil society.

Furthermore, Takougang’s claim that the government instructed the media to report fairness in an election that was widely condemned by the opposition and other observers may seem farfetched in a democracy, but others think it is to satisfy the international community especially the West. O’Donnell and Gramer (2018) write that the Biya regime has not only been doing this but has been paying what they call “zombie observers” to stand in for international observers and report on the credibility of elections held in the country. In the 2018 presidential elections, Transparency International – an international anti-corruption organization - denied a group of foreign men and women who claimed to be representatives of this group in Cameroon (O’Donnell and Gramer 2018). These individuals claimed that the elections were perfect contrary to allegations from the opposition and other groups that the elections were marred by mass irregularities. The evaluation from these individuals only confirmed the accusations that the government operates with these ‘zombie observers’ to deter international pressure on good governance and freedom.

Besides the zombie observers, O’Donnell and Gramer (2018) insinuate that the Biya regime has been paying “powerful lobbying and public relations firms” to ‘fix’ its image in the International Community. O’Donnell and Gramer call it “buying outside prestige”. They claim that the Yaoundé government has been paying up to \$184,000 a month to these firms. According to them, Squire Patton Boggs, a public relations firm, in 2018 was receiving \$100,000 every four months from the government of Cameroon. Another firm, Glover Park Group which was doing a similar job for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was receiving \$51,000 every month to assist the Cameroonian Embassy in Washington with public affairs and communication in the same year, 2018. Still in the same year, Mercury Public Affairs, another media relations company received \$100,000 every month for a similar job (O’Donnell and Gramer, 2018). Part of their job they say was “keeping in contact with US lawmakers”. These elected officials in return had the duty to

dissuade the US government in case of any negative action that may be taken against Cameroon for whatever reason. Since the Anglophone crisis started in 2016, the US has been making statements but has taken very cosmetic action.

In addition, Biya and his party, it appears, have not only been manipulating things at the level of elections and public relations but constitutionally too. When multi-partism was introduced in the country in 1990, the opposition started calling for a constitutional change through a “sovereign national conference”, as was the case in other Francophone African countries. Instead, after months of refusal, the Biya government in 1991 organized its own model of conference known as the Tripartite with its agenda set and controlled by the government (Takougang 2003; Boulaga 1997; Takougang and Krieger 1998). Also, most of the delegates were from the ruling CPDM though members of the opposition and civil society attended (Takougang, 2003). This is similar to the National Dialogue organized by the same regime in 2019 to discuss the crisis in the two English Speaking regions. The dialogue was organized two years after the opposition, civil society and the international community made calls for an inclusive dialogue to end the armed conflict between the government and the secessionists in the regions. In lieu, just like the 1991 conference, the government organized its version of dialogue with the majority of delegates from the CPDM and none from the secessionist camp (Associated Press 2019). Of the Tripartite in 1991, Takougang (2003: 427) writes that “many of the decisions articulated in the final outcome of the conference known as the Yaoundé Declaration were tailor-made to suit the aspirations of President Biya and the CPDM”. This is very much the outcome of the National Dialogue 29 years after the Tripartite. Most proposals at the conference did not address the problem that the conference was meant to resolve according to most members of the opposition and civil society organizations (Al Jazeera, 2019). Some proposals like the special status approved by president Biya to be granted to the North-West and South-West Regions were clauses that existed in the 1996 constitution.

Moreover, recommendations from the Tripartite conference were only added to the constitution in 1996 and the first law from the amended constitution was put in place in 2002. According to Yanou (2013), the elections for senate prescribed by Law No 2006/005/14/7/06 only took place in April 2013 some 17 years after the senate was technically created in the 1996 constitution. Yanou argues that “the

inordinate delay in creating the senate was part of a deliberate strategy by an executive that abhors effective legislative power structures that can limit the executive's unilateral powers such as that used to amend the constitution in 2008 to remove the presidential term limit to allow the incumbent to run for the 2011 presidential election” (Yanou, 2013: 305). In the 1996 constitutional amendment, Biya did not only add the conference recommendations that suited him but also increased the presidential term from five to seven years, thus allowing himself additional years in power (Dicklitch, 2002).

Furthermore, Biya and his party have been able to win over the military by “protecting their social and economic privileges, especially those of high-ranking officers, and also by according them a highly visible role in national politics” (Takougang, 2003: 429). The only attempted coup in the Biya era was in 1984 which was smashed, and dozens were arrested. Since then, he has won the military to his side and they have remained loyal to him, thus helping him to retain power for over three decades (Gros 1995, DeLancey, 1989). Fonchingong writes that in return for favors granted by the regime, the military has ensured that the opposition be suppressed by continuously harassing and intimidating them (Fonchingong, 1998: 120). This has also been the case with rights groups as well as individuals who stand against the government. Gros (1995) goes even a step further, arguing that the military has been responsible for the slow pace of democratization in the country (Gros, 1995: 121).

Besides using the military to his advantage, Biya is said to have been intimidating and coercing his political opponents, even those of the same party. According to Smith (2008), Ayissi Mvondo, a former minister who aimed to run against Biya, died under mysterious circumstances shortly after he declared his intentions. It is alleged that he died in the hands of uniform officers (Smith 2008). Another Minister Titus Edzoa, who had been Secretary General at the Presidency and a presidential confidant, resigned as health minister in 1997 to stand in the presidential election, was promptly arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison for embezzlement (Smith, 2008). Morse (2017) adds that former Secretary General at the Presidency, Jean-Marie Mebara was arrested over corruption allegations in 2008 after it was rumored that he planned to challenge Biya in the elections (Morse, 2017: 12). He was still in prison in 2023. More so, since 2011, CPDM supporters have been

describing Biya as the “natural candidate” of the party and massively endorsed him for the 2018 Presidential election without any challenge. In Smith’s view, “standing for election against Mr Biya is not a rational move, since local and foreign observers consistently describe his elections as “flawed”” (Smith, 2008). Besides CPDM internal politics, other scholars suggest that Biya has been coercing and intimidating the opposition as well. Morse (2017) notes that a curfew was imposed on the North-West and South-West Provinces in 1997, and the major opposition leader Ni John Fru Ndi of the SDF was detained for weeks before the elections. In Morse’s words, “the coercive apparatus was also unleashed harshly against the opposition” (Morse, 2017: 13). His choice of words paints a picture of how awful it was, especially for a country that embraced democracy only seven years earlier. This trend did not end in 1997 as Morse adds that many opposition parties were barred from holding rallies in the Center Province, and the SDF was denied access to most provinces until May 2004. Furthermore, Fru Ndi and other SDF members were “bizarrely” charged with murder, following a death at one of their rallies (Morse, 2017: 13). This pattern apparently worked for the Biya regime, and they improved on it as the years went by.

1. Appointments to Strategic State Institutions

The constitution of Cameroon gives the head of state the right to appoint members of strategic state institutions like the Constitutional Council and Elections Cameroon (the country’s electoral body). These two institutions are concerned with election processes from voter registration to the validation and declaration of results. Though provided by the 1996 constitution and established by Law N° 96 /06 of 18 January 1996, Biya only organized and appointed members to the Constitutional Council in February 2018 (Enonchong, 2020). This according to many was a strategic move since presidential elections were coming up in October that year. Article 48 (1) of the constitution charges that: “The Constitutional Council shall ensure the regularity of presidential elections, parliamentary elections, and referendum operations. It shall proclaim the results thereof”. Appointments to this Council are based on nominations by the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary (Enonchong, 2020). Three members including the president of the Council are selected by the President of the Republic, three by the Speaker of the National Assembly (with the Bureau’s approval), three by the speaker of the Senate (with the Bureau’s approval) and two members by the Higher Judicial Council, making a total

of eleven. Freedom House (2020) and Enonchong (2020) argue that the process of these appointments makes the Council a potential tool for the enhancement and promotion of party interest rather than the interest of the nation. This they explain is because the process militates against the independence of members.

According to Enonchong (2020), the head of state in his capacity as the leader of the ruling CPDM exerts influence over the Senate and Parliamentary nominations. Given the party's overwhelming majority in both houses and in the various bureaus that nominate the candidates, this suggests that the nominations would favor his choices. Gwaibi (2022) strengthens this assertion by adding that the parliament's role is "severely restricted" by the head of state whose proposals are given precedence and consideration. Moreover, the idea of "party discipline" that condemns party members in parliament to align with the party's choices also adds to the pressure on legislators (Gwaibi, 2022). Furthermore, Enonchong (2020) points to one of the lapses in the appointment process of the Council, which is also the appointment of senators by the head of state. The current senate president is one of the 30 senators appointed by the head of state and Enonchong sees it as a direct debt to the head of state since his tenure or renewal also depends on him. This also points to the head of the Constitutional Council who doubles as chair of the Higher Judicial Council and is responsible for the nomination of two members to the Council. He, like other Council members, is appointed for a renewable term of six years. Enonchong argues that they may be interested in preserving good relations with the nominating authorities in the hope of securing future appointments. Moreover, their benefits and allowances are determined solely by presidential decree putting them in a situation where they must remain loyal to the source. According to Freedom House (2020), majority of the eleven appointed members of the Council have ties to the CPDM just like those of Elections Cameroon (ElecCam) that have been dominated by members of the CPDM party. The timing of the appointments was also very strategic for Biya and the CPDM party given that presidential and senatorial elections were coming up that year and the legislatives were in 2020. The effect can be seen in the way the Council dismissed petitions from opposition parties in the senatorial, presidential, and parliamentary elections, leaving the CPDM with a massive win (Freedom House 2020). According to Enonchong (2020: 163), the Council in these hearings "adopted an avoidance technique, by shying away from the substantive aspects of complaints

and instead favored a very textual approach to the interpretation of the law”. In this regard, Freedom House (2020) scored Cameroon 0/4 on the fairness of electoral laws and framework, and the partiality demonstrated by the election management bodies.

C. National Security Approach and Democracy

1. “Hammer and Lies” Security Approach.

On 26 September 2023, Cameroon’s Minister of Territorial Administration, Atanga Nji Paul who doubles as a member of the country’s Security Council gave a pictorial anecdote in a security meeting that captured Cameroon’s national security approach. Addressing the issue of insecurity in the capital city Yaoundé, Atanga Nji likened the maintenance of order to a blender and those violating the order to ingredients. In his words: “...*maintaining order is a blender and the criminals, the aggressors; terrorists and those who plot against republican institutions are the ingredients. When the ingredients enter the blender, the outcome is a paste*” (Paul, 2023, translated from French).

Cameroon since its independence in 1960 has always responded to major national security threats and protests with force according to many. Takougang (2003) sees this pattern as a colonial legacy inherited from the French. The first major threat in the country was the war of independence waged against the government and the French by *the L'Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC)* (Stark, 1976; DeLancey, 1987; Ngoh, 1987; Fanso, 1987). The rebellion was only stopped in the 1970s after the main leaders like Reuben Um Nyobe and Roland Moumie were killed. Ardener (1962) and Atangana (2010) note that the government of Ahidjo and the French responded to this rebellion with heavy militarization. A state of emergency was declared in the Bamileke, the Wouri, Nyong-et-Sanaga and the Sanaga Maritime areas where the rebels were active (Atangana, 2010: 109). Special criminal courts were also set up in these areas. According to Atangana, the state of emergency allowed the government to indiscriminately arrest, torture and execute people. It is estimated that thousands died in the raids against the *marquizads* as they were known. France 24 (2016) reported that lethal force was used against the groups, and anyone considered a supporter was not spared. The report adds that men and women alike were killed, and their heads were cut off and hung on sticks to send a signal to others. Ardener (1962: 347) adds that the founder of the movement Dr.

Roland Moumie was poisoned in Switzerland under “mysterious circumstances” while others like Ernest Ouandie were publicly executed. Like Nik (2014), Atangana (2010: 109) thinks that France has been very instrumental in Cameroon’s successes against rebellion. He argues that the Ahidjo government went ahead with this assault because it knew it had French military backing. According to Fombad (2004: 62), *“the people of Cameroon, since independence in 1960, have had to endure considerable periods of time under a state of emergency. In fact, the independent state of Cameroon was born amid a state of emergency proclaimed in 1958 and this continued in many parts of the country until the late 1970s”*.

According to Beseng et al. (2023), the government’s approach to the Anglophone conflict has been one of “hammer and lies”. In other words, a mix of military force and disinformation. In their view, the government has been seeking a military victory over the separatists since the start of the armed conflict but simultaneously deny the existence of the conflict and casually refer to it as a security crisis in the NW and SW. They note that in terms of the “hammer” approach, the government has continued to deploy new special elite forces to the region while trivializing the conflict with the “lies” approach. To them, the only official attempt to resolve the conflict was the Major National Dialogue (MND) that excluded separatist groups and was criticized as an elite gathering that had little to do with the major concerns in the conflict. They further note that the government has not changed its approach in the six years of conflict but has put in place a reconstruction plan while the conflict is still underway.

Konings and Nyamnjoh (2019: 60) parodies the “hammer” narrative and argues that the successive governments had adopted a “workman’s” approach towards the Anglophone efforts to draw attention to their worries. In this light, they note that the only tool the government has used is the hammer to which every problem is a nail. On the “lie” approach, Enonchong (2022: 178) notes that Cameroon has a history of denying the existence of a problem while simultaneously promoting a divide and rule strategy to dilute the problem. She supports this by adding that the government has pitted the South-West region against the North-West region over the years to avoid addressing the Anglophone Problem. Furthermore, like Beseng et al. (2023), Roberts (2022) also uses the “hammer and lies” analogy to describes the government’s approach to the Anglophone crisis. However, Roberts

looks at it from the angle of foreign relations and argues that the “lie” strategy is aimed at limiting international pressure especially from western governments and international organizations that would push for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Nevertheless, he claims that the lack of action from western powers is due to the prioritization of their interest in Cameroon over the conflict.

Even so, the “hammer and lies” strategy has not fully worked out for the government as the Anglophone conflict has raged on for six years. According to Lekunze and Page (2022), the government underestimated separatists’ use of force or resistance to push their objectives. In their view, the government thought the “hammer” approach would pacify the resistance in a short space of time. They note that government officials had doubted separatists’ ability to fund an armed conflict and supposed that acute violence would force the fighters to surrender. Earlier in 2017, some officials as well as some opposition leaders dismissed the idea that the crisis could morph into an armed conflict. Though the conflict has been dragging on for six years, Lekunze and Page (2022) explain that the government has no problem with the “hammer” approach because Cameroon’s ability to maintain an authoritarian political system without relying on tax revenue contributed to the conflict. They posit that both the Biya and the Ahidjo regimes have been able to maintain power through the exploitation and management of timber and gas/oil, which is managed directly by the presidency. To support this assertion, they add that the present Secretary General at the presidency is the board chair of SNH (*Société Nationale des Hydrocarbures*) which is the body in charge of the management of oil and gas. They claim that this body alongside the timber sector generates enough cash for the presidency to finance the military and control political competition.

2. Democracy and Coercion

According to Atangana (2010: 103-105), the French Cameroon administration was not ready for democratic elections as they prepared to launch a new state. According to him, French Cameroon Prime Minister, Amadou Ahidjo in 1959 accepted to organize general elections after independence in 1960 to elect the government of the newly independent state. However, this was rather a scheme to lure the UPC to slow down their fight. This only pushed the UPC to intensify their rebellion after independence. Prior to this promise by Ahidjo, Atangana notes that the French and Ahidjo’s government have been strongly resisting calls for a

referendum by some Cameroonians and some UN member countries. These groups accused the French of trying to grant Cameroon a fictitious independence and add it to the French community of colonies. Ahidjo defended this opposition saying that the assembly was representative of the people and there was no need for a referendum to assess this. To him, elections before independence could only lead to more disagreements and possible tensions. On the contrary, Ahidjo's predecessor and French Cameroon's first Prime Minister, Andre Marie Mbida told the visiting UN team that the French had proposed severally that Cameroon be given a conditional independence and merged to the French community (Atangana, 2010: 103). His continuous rejection cost him his position as the P.M and was replaced by Amadou Ahidjo. While there was stiff resistance to democratic elections in French Cameroon, British Cameroon in the same year (1959) witnessed a transition from the ruling party to the opposition through elections (Awasum, 2000). This is later to be one of the cultural clashes that builds up to the Anglophone crisis that animates the period studied.

Furthermore, since the extinction of the UPC rebel wing, Cameroon experienced relative peace until 1990 when there were uprisings in demand for democracy. Like the 1990 riots, the 1992 post-presidential elections crisis and the 2008 fuel hike protest were met with heavy military responses (Amin, 2012; Ngwane, 2014). Until 2014, Cameroon was considered a peaceful country notwithstanding the protests and military repressions. According to Diclitch (2002), the peace and political stability considered by some has been artificially based on the suppression of political participation (Diclitch 2002: 152). The high point was in 2017 when Yaoundé formally declared war on the Anglophone secessionists (Sonkey, 2017). Many saw this as a civil war that the country had avoided for several years. This was so because Boko Haram was viewed as an external threat though it had bases in Cameroon. Some sources argue that Biya was defeated in the 1992 presidential elections and only had to use force and the institutions in place to keep himself in power (Yanou, 2013; Takoukang, 2002; Ngwane, 2014). A similar claim is made of the 2008 fuel hike riots since it coincided with the change of the constitution that removed the term limit and allowed Biya to run indefinitely (Amin 2012). He had to resort to force to end the protests that took place in almost every part of the country. The Biya regime prides itself to be the catalyst of democracy in

Cameroon but still uses a similar security approach as the French and the Ahidjo regimes that were dictatorship.

The use of force by the Biya regime to combat security threats gives credit to those who say insecurity and democracy do not go together (Offner, 2005; Abubakar, 2013; Raskin, 1976; Segal, 1994; Abubakar and Gorondutse, 2013). This school of thought believes that in a situation of insecurity, those with authority will take measures that can be considered undemocratic. Offner (2005) goes further claiming that authorities can even take advantage of the security threat to make political gains. He asserts that George Bush took advantage of the Iraqi war to win another term in office in 2004. Furthermore, Abubakar and Gorondutse (2013) and Abubakar (2013) on their part argue that insecurity affects the practice of democracy and good governance. They look at national security from the angle of elections in Nigeria and argue that “where elections are characterized by violence, thuggery, intimidation, rigging, ballot box snatching and stuffing and other forms of electoral malpractices, they bring to question the very essence of democracy and compromise the nation's security” (Abubakar, 2013: 3). According to Abubakar (2013), elections maneuvering is a huge threat to national security and the existence of the state. He, like Abubakar and Gorondutse (2013), however, focuses on insecurity brought as an outcome of election malpractices, which are considered in the study as part of democracy amongst other components. The focus is on how incumbent governments can use insecurity arising from elections malpractices to create a favorable environment for themselves. In Cameroon for instance, those who protested the 2018 presidential elections were mostly arrested and jailed thus weakening their ability to win in the subsequent election. This example amplifies Offner’s view that insecurity and democracy can hardly work together as one is bound to give way for the other leaving the governments in charge to gain. The arrest of the major opposition leader in the 2018 presidential election raised the question of the respect of human rights, which is a major part of democracy. In this regard, Dicklitch (2002: 152) opines that the “respect for human rights in Africa is more often the exception than the rule”. In the name of national security, the law on terrorism in Cameroon for example, allows for arbitrary arrest and detention and in some cases torture (Forkum 2018). This also raises the question of how national security can be balanced with democracy.

The use of force seems to have been the mood of operation from the days of independence in Cameroon. However, the height came with Biya's creation of the Rapid Intervention Brigade (BIR) in 2001. According to Morse (2017), the military branch was established to deal with gang activity along Cameroon's borders and highways. However, the force has been increasingly deployed to cities to maintain law and order. In 2008 when it was first deployed to quell the Anti-Biya riots, it is reported that 100 people were killed. Until 2017, it was estimated that the BIR was responsible for over 700 deaths in the country (Morse, 2017: 13). The use of this force in 2008 allowed Biya to change the constitution and remove the presidential term limit. It gave him a chance to run in 2011 and 2018.

D. Law on Terrorism

According to Mueller (2006: 1), the world's reaction to terrorism has caused more harm than good in terms of civil liberties, human lives, and economic prosperity. This assertion may seem overblown but the reaction of the government of Cameroon towards the Boko Haram insurgency may give the statement some credit. With the threat of Boko Haram that engulfed four countries including Cameroon, the government of Cameroon in 2014 passed Law No. 2014/028 to combat terrorism from this group. This law was put under the military court and with a maximum penalty of death. According to Kingah (2018), the country's Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) had provisions that could be applied to Boko Haram fighters, but the country decided to enact new anti-terrorism laws because some relevant articles of the code pertained only to citizens and most Boko Haram fighters were foreigners. The problem surfaced when this law that was put in place for "foreigners" per se, was applied to citizens in circumstances quite different from the Boko Haram case. In Forkum's (2018) view, this law in essence does not go against international conventions, but the content and usage of the law is problematic. Forkum like Quintal (2017) argues that this law has been used by the government of Cameroon to target those it sees as a threat to its power. This thought echoes the argument of this thesis and puts it into perspective. Quintal (2017) demonstrates how this law has been detrimental to journalists who report on Boko Haram issues and the Anglophone crisis, as well as those critical of the regime. He quotes an English language newspaper editor who thinks that:

“the government conflates news coverage of militants or demonstrators with praise, and journalists don’t know what they can and cannot report safely, so they err on the side of caution.” ... “We are not told what the difference is about reporting the facts or acclaiming what is happening and we therefore run the risk of contravening the anti-terrorism law.” (Quintal 2017)

Quintal sees this law as a “powerful tool of fear” against opposition parties, civil society, media, and rights groups. She like Forkum (2018) agrees that this law gives room for government manipulation. According to Missoffe (2016) and Forkum (2018), most of the terms and articles in this law are not explicitly defined thus making it open for anyone to be termed a terrorist. Forkum (2018) compares the law in Cameroon with those in Niger and Nigeria noting that although the three countries have similar laws on terrorism, those in the latter countries are well defined. In Niger and Nigeria, the offences are listed under each law, unlike in Cameroon, which leaves it open to vast interpretations. Under the Niger and Nigerian laws “offences already punishable under common law are referred to and become terrorist offences if committed for a specific purpose, under special circumstances” (Forkum, 2018). In Cameroon, this law incriminates even public manifestations thus violating freedom of assembly that is a basic human right.

E. State of Democracy and Governance in Cameroon

The Economist (2022) ranked Cameroon amongst the worst performing democracies (142) and as a dictatorship. On its part, Freedom House (2021) scored the country 16/100 on political rights and civil liberties. In 2020, Transparency International placed the country 149th out of 180 in governance. According to The Economist (2020), Cameroon failed in all four parameters that they measured which include the electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Though the agency ranked Cameroon amongst authoritarian regimes, it acknowledged in its 2019 report that Cameroon has been able to put the needed institutions in place, but the problem remains at the level of execution (The Economist 2019). Morse (2019) also agrees that the problem in Cameroon is not the lack of institutions but argues that the regime only create them to validate or legitimize its power. In Morse’s view, ‘authoritarian’ regimes rely more on institutions, especially political parties to validate elections. He

notes that in the case of Cameroon, the Biya regime has been able to give elites comfortable positions in the administration, thus motivating them to gather support for the ruling CPDM. Besides political parties, Cameroon has an election body (ELECAM), a Constitutional Council and a National Human Rights Commission that is supposed to ensure the respect for political rights and human rights. However, these organs are only there to fulfill international requirements and legitimize the regime's power (Morse, 2019; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Yanou, 2013). According to Yanou (2013: 304), these institutions and laws are just superficial and deceptive because the actual application on ground tells a different story from the impression given by their existence.

According to Nik (2014), Cameroon is yet to experience any “meaningful democracy”. However, he puts the blame on foreign donors that use their donations to mingle in the internal affairs of other countries. He like Dicklitch (2002) accuses France of being at the center of what they call “donor conditionality” and “donor-patron” approach. In Nik's view, France is to blame for the failure of internal and external efforts to establish a real democracy in the country. Dicklitch goes further than that and adds that France has been protecting the regime in exchange of oil and other economic benefits. According to both Nik (2014) and Dicklitch (2002), the Biya regime was able to survive the “Ghost Town” operations in the early 1990s because of help from France. The opposition and average Cameroonians could no longer support the economic boycott and thus yielded to the government that had continuous support from France. Ghost towns were a boycott protest organized by the opposition in the early 1990s to demand multipartyism. In the Anglophone case, Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) note that France continued to support the Francophone-dominated regime in Cameroon economically and politically to weaken the Anglophone opposition forces that emerged from the liberalization process. They cite the SDF and SCNC failures as an effect of non-French support to the course and French support to the government. According to them, the popularity of these movements posed a threat to “France's superior interest in Cameroon” because it fueled existing anti-French sentiments, and their calls for federation or secession endangered France's control over oil exploitation in Anglophone Cameroon. Lekunze (2022) on his part posits that since independence, Cameroon's foreign and defense policy remained largely under French control though the Biya regime gained

more of this control and exercised additional agency in the diplomatic front expanding friendly relations to the likes of the USA, Russia, China, and UK that wield power in the international scene. To him, the government of Cameroon has been able to keep international actors away from the conflicts in the country through these relations. To add, Dicklitch (2002) argues that the support to Cameroon's government that is purportedly holding back democracy is not only limited to France. He cites the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as huge sponsors of the Biya regime. According to him, the resources handed to the government by these organizations only help the government to maintain itself in power and slow down democratic progress. In another twist, Nik (2014) turns the blame on President Paul Biya, arguing that these donors would never have had a chance if Biya was not willing to fraud, repress and corrupt the nation. These actions in his opinion have stifled democracy in the country.

Cheeseman (2015) on his part sees Cameroon as a "stable democracy" that has established strong control over its political system and has no fear of organizing elections. This ties with Nyamnjoh (2005) and Takougang (2003) claims that opposition in the country has been weakened by government's suppression and by the electoral system that is largely influenced by the state. Freedom House (2018) parodies this assertion noting that the elections body ELECAM is highly dominated by CPDM sympathizers who help the party benefit from "electoral gerrymandering". O'Donnell & Gramer (2018) adds that Biya's stay in power has been by "co-opting elites who could potentially challenge him, undermining a fragmented opposition, and bending state institutions, including those overseeing the election, toward his own interests". Like Morse (2019), O'Donnell and Gramer see the October 7, 2018, presidential elections as a sham. In their opinion, the election was marked by "apathy" and "outright fear". In this election, some areas had as low as 1% voter turnout especially in the troubled Anglophone regions, but Biya was said to have had a huge win in these areas. According to O'Donnell and Gramer (2018), only a few heavily militarized polling stations were opened in most of Anglophone Cameroon. Nevertheless, Dicklitch (2002) says Cameroon is formally considered a multiparty democracy though the present dispensation is dangerous for the country as it can only attract violence and chaos. Unlike in other democracies where candidates seek votes through campaigns, Biya seldom campaigns for himself but always wins by a

huge margin. Campaigns are done on his behalf by his party and elites. He only visits one or two towns or none during campaign season and does so more as an official visit than as a campaign rally. This enforces Cheeseman's (2015) argument that Biya is in total control of the political system. According to Schatzberg (2001: 218–19), calling political regimes in Africa democratic is “misleading, arbitrary, and premature”.

The literature has looked at what others have said in connection with the subject of this thesis. It focused on the Biya regime and how it has approached democracy, security, and governance. This shows the gaps that this thesis intends to fill and ease understanding of the analysis. However, the literature also touches on the previous regime to get an understanding of how the country had treated certain subjects. The literature has shown that Cameroon has had a brutal approach to national security and has often resisted the implementation of democracy. It has also shown that the Biya regime has been rigging elections to retain power and using the law on terrorism on critics and opponents. In addition, the literature has looked at the relation between democracy, governance and national security but has observed from the angle of how bad democratic practices lead to insecurity. This leaves a gap that this thesis intends to fill by examining how the manipulation of national security can negatively affect democracy and governance. The literature has also failed to demonstrate how governments that manipulate democracy make political gains. This thesis aims to breakdown the various ways and show how governments sustain this process. Though the literature has shown the various coercive and manipulative ways that the Biya regime uses to keep power, it has not looked at it from the angle of manipulating security. The period 2014 to 2023 is one of the most challenging to Cameroon in terms of security and coincided with all the major elections in the country. This makes it a good case to examine the manipulation of security. This thesis intends to exploit and explore this angle through government communication in this period. More so, none of the works in the literature has used the content analysis technique to explain the relation between national security, democracy, and governance in Cameroon. None has also surveyed government communication in this direction. This thesis aims to fill this gap.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THREAT AND SECURITY VERSUS DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Imenda (2014: 189) defines conceptual framework as “an end result of bringing together a number of related concepts to explain or predict a given event or give a broader understanding of the phenomenon of interest—or simply, of a research problem”. Thus, a conceptual framework is more of an inductive process in which distinct, separate elements are combined to provide a more comprehensive map of potential connections. According to Lara et al. (2020), the purpose of a conceptual framework is to showcase the importance of the research and explain the pathways that will be used to arrive at the conclusion. Evans (2007: 8) agrees with Lara et al. and adds that a conceptual framework helps a reader to understand why the researcher selected a particular approach and made certain assumptions, and why the researcher chose the concepts and theories used and why he/she agrees or disagrees with these concepts or scholars. According to her, a conceptual framework eases the understanding of the literature review and gives direction to the research. Thus, this chapter formulates a conceptual framework that best explains the relationship between national security, democracy, and governance by looking at the concepts and theories on these variables and linking them to the literature reviewed.

The literature review has explored the various views on security, democracy and governance in Cameroon and suggest that Cameroon’s national security approach has always been in opposition with democracy. The national security approach has been described as the “hammer and lies” approach. However, the literature has not demonstrated the link between these variables because of some missing sub-variables. Besides the independent variable that is national security and the dependent variables that is democracy and governance, the missing variables in the literature are the mediator variable, which is elections, and the moderating variable, which is a security threat.

A. Moderating Variable: Security Threat

A moderating variable is a variable that influences the strength or direction of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable. The Anglophone crisis/armed conflict and the MRC crisis will serve as the moderating variable. This is because the government's reaction to these situations strengthens the effects of national security on democracy and governance. It also distinguishes the link between these variables during the period 2014-2023 and the period prior described in the literature. There are two types of security threats in this context that need to be simplified. These are the *actual threat* and the *perceived threat*. The actual threat refers to the armed conflict that government forces have been fighting with Anglophone separatists since 2017. The perceived threat is that which the government designated as a threat. These include the Anglophone protests and the MRC protests. Perceived because of the threat it posed to the government's interest rather than to the nation's security, judging by the events. This kind of threat is explained by critical security theories which suggest that governments create such threats to either serve their interest or justify military violence (Kaldor 2011, Agamben 2005).

The question of how threats are constructed has been posed by several security scholars (Fierke 2017, Beck 2003, Weldes 1996, Wæver 1995) and most conclude that threats are socially constructed often in relation to identity and military strength. Fierke (2017) notes that qualifying a threat as a social construct does not dismiss the fact that the threat exists but that the meaning given to the threat is what matters. According to Huysmans et al (2006), traditional security techniques begin with an objective threat, which is considered to exist regardless of the practices, policies, dialogues, and expertise that security organizations employ. To Fierke (2017), social, cultural, and political factors influence how dangers are rated, leading to the classification of certain occurrences as security threats and the general disregard of others. She adds that discourse shapes the meaning that has been associated to weapons or threats of any type and a potential danger or idea becomes a security question. In this regard, an abstract idea can be converted to objective reality by those making the decision. According to Burke (2002), security is essentially tied to insecurity and for security to be justified, an image of insecurity must be produced continually. Prior to September 11, 2001, terrorism was and still is classified as

criminal conduct by many international entities. But with the September 11 attack, terrorism became an existential danger to the US and eventually globally (Sproat 2008, Kaldor 2011, Fierke 2017). In Fierke's view, the attack had utmost priority because it was perceived as existential, meaning that it threatened both the existence of America and its identity. Hence, the change in the understanding and approach towards terrorism.

1. Actual Threat

On November 30, 2017, President Biya made it official that Cameroon was going to war against Anglophone separatists after one of the groups murdered six-(6) security officers in the South-West Region (Beseng at al., 2023, Sonkey, 2017). He described them to the press as terrorists and deployed more troops and arms to the regions. Prior to this moment, security forces were stationed in every major Anglophone town to quell the protests that started in 2016. Consequently, fighting between government forces and rebels from that moment continued in 2023 and had registered more than 6000 deaths, 765,000 internal displacements and more than 70,000 refugees in Nigeria alone, according to International Crisis Group (2022). Human Rights Watch (2022a) reported that both the military and separatist fighters committed grave atrocities on civilians. In addition, government forces have been battling Boko Haram in the north of the country since 2013. The Boko Haram case led to the enactment of the law on terrorism, which became "an instrument" in government's hands according to Kingah (2018), Missoffe (2016) and Forkum (2018). Thus, the government used this "instrument" to turn every contestation thereafter into a major national threat (Forkum, 2018). The use of this law to imprison protesters in the Anglophone case cumulated into the actual threat and today the separatist fighters pose a real threat to the population in the Anglophone regions and beyond.

2. Perceived Threat and the Anglophone Protests

Soon after the start of Anglophone protests in 2016, the government quickly labelled Anglophone protest leaders as terrorists and arrested some of them. Those arrested were judged in a military court under the terrorism law. At the point of arrest, Anglophones were still protesting in the streets unarmed and observing school boycotts and "ghost towns". They were demanding amongst other things a return to

the 1961 federal form of state. According to the constitution, Cameroon is a unitary decentralized state, but in practice, the country is still very much centralized. Regional elections to set up regional councils were only held in 2020 since the country adopted decentralization in 1996 (Freedom House 2020). A federal system will therefore mean that the central government will share power with another federated state, as was the case between 1961 and 1972. This idea apparently posed a threat to power in Yaoundé given the massive protests all over the Anglophone regions. In addressing the protests in 2016, Biya noted that all ideas to resolve the Anglophone crisis were welcome except that which touched on the form of state. In Biya's words: *"We should remain open to constructive ideas, to the exclusion, however, of those that would affect the form of our State"* (Biya, 2016).

In this speech alone, Biya used the word unity five times besides qualifiers like "one and indivisible", "living together" and others. To him, federalism meant separation. Consequently, the massive reaction from Anglophones in the streets both home and abroad pushed the government to quickly interpret the grievances as a call for secession even before it was pronounced. The brutal military response led some Anglophones to shift the call for federalism to a call for secession and eventually an armed response, thus creating a major security threat. In other words, the threat was more to the government's interest than to the nation's security because the protests were for the most part street marches and passive remonstrations in the form of boycotts.

3. Perceived Threat and the MRC Protests

According to Elections Cameroon (2019), the MRC came second in the 2018 Presidential election with a 14.23% score. The party bypassed the SDF that had occupied this position since the first multiparty elections in 1992. However, the MRC rejected these results and the party leader declared himself winner. The Constitutional Council dismissed the party's claim of victory and appeals on grounds that the party did not provide enough evidence to prove their case. Since then, the party persistently organized street protests to contest the elections. These protests were met with brutal force from security agents and bans from the authorities. The party had also called for street protests to address national issues besides the electoral code. In 2020, the party called for protests to end the war in the Anglophone region and to ask for president Biya's resignation for failing to manage the crisis/conflict.

To this call, four ministers plus the Secretary General at the Presidency reacted and accused the party of calling for an insurrection and supporting terrorism. According to the Minister of Communication Rene Sadi (2020b): *“Finally, I would like to reaffirm here that Cameroon is a Rule of Law where public meetings and demonstrations are governed by laws under which the marches scheduled for September 22, 2020, by the CRM were banned on the grounds that they had nothing “peaceful” and that they were likely to seriously disturb public order”*.

The minister did not make any reference to the notice from the authorized local authority but banned the protests prior and made it a national security issue as mentioned in his speech. In line with this declaration, towns across the nation were heavily militarized prior and after the day of the said protests. Those who attempted to protest were shot at and hundreds were arrested and charged with terrorism (International Crisis Group 2020).

During the election campaigns, the MRC was able to mobilize huge numbers to its rallies. This suggested that a call for demonstrations by the party could bring many to the street and possibly lead to an outcome that may not be favorable to the government. Besides, the fact that the party came second in its first presidential election meant that it had prospects to move higher. Furthermore, the MRC calls for protests touched on national issues affecting most of the citizens. This alone could cause the people to yield to the invitation. The party had been demanding a review of the country’s electoral code for years, but the government remained adamant. Other opposition parties like the SDF had also criticized the electoral code and noted that the current format could only favor the party in power. In this regard, the MRC succeeded in mobilizing other political parties to join in the fight, thus posing a threat to the government and to the party in power.

Both the Anglophone and MRC protests were reported to have been peaceful and posed no threat (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Online pictures and videos showed Anglophone protesters across the Anglophone regions marching with “peace plants” and chanting “no violence”. However, this in the government’s eyes was a security threat even though police and military were deployed to maintain peace and order. According to Human Rights Watch (2019), *“in the fall of 2017, Cameroonian security forces suppressed large-scale protests organized to celebrate the symbolic independence of Anglophone regions from the country's French-speaking areas,*

killing more than 20 protesters. Since then, the emergence of armed separatist groups has been accompanied by attacks and a growing militarization of the Anglophone regions.” Thus, the moderating variable consists of both the actual threat and the perceived threat as explained above. Moreover, the national security approach was the same towards both and thus strengthens the link between national security, democracy, and governance.

B. Mediating Variable: Elections

A mediating variable is that which explains the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable and clarifies how the independent variable affects the dependent variable. The various elections between 2018 and 2023 offer a good measurement and link between national security democracy and governance. This mediating variable acting together with the moderating variable strengthens this link and clarifies the difference between the national security approach prior to 2014 and between 2014 and 2023. The literature has suggested that elections were rigged in the past and that military force was used in some post-election cases like the 1992 presidential election but the elections between 2018 and 2023 coincided with a major security threat and gives a different angle to explore. In addition, protests have been brutally dispersed in the past like the 2008 anti-Biya protests, but there were no elections to sample the performance of democracy and governance in the face of this national security approach. Diagram one below thus demonstrates the relationship between the variables and gives the pattern that the research follows in establishing this relationship.

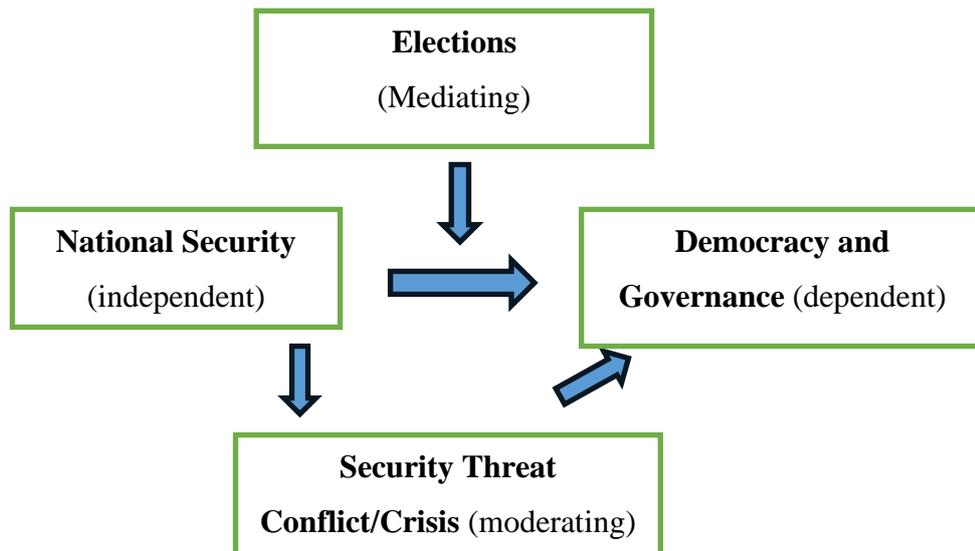


Figure 1: Relationship between variables

C. Independent Variable: National Security

Security often means different things but simply put, it is the state of being free from danger or threat. Traditionally, the term security referred to an armed threat but with time, some scholars thought this limitation excluded other security perils faced by humans. As such, they broadened the term to include political, economic, environmental, and social sectors. With the growth in the use of the internet, another form of security threat emerged as cyber security and has been added to the definition of security as well. According to Buzan et al. (1998: 5), broadening the scope of security helps conceptualize it beyond the idea that it is a threat or problem. This they say is because threats can occur in military and nonmilitary sectors. They thus define military security as entirely concerned with forceful coercion. Political security in their view is about authority, legitimacy, and legality. Economic security about trade, finance, and production. Societal security about a collective identity, and environmental security about humans and the planet. All these sectors listed by Buzan et al. are very relevant to the understanding of security, but another group thinks emphasis should be laid on what they term human security.

According to Kaldor (2011: 445), human security refers to the security of individuals and their communities. Unlike other forms of security, this genre of security lays emphasis on the security of individuals over state security. However, Kaldor notes that human security does not exclude state security. It recognizes the state's role in fighting a foreign enemy to secure the people but stresses the respect

for human rights in the process of securing persons and their property, especially in internal affairs (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007, Alkire 2003). According to Kaldor, human security “has to be about protecting people from foreign military aggression, genocide, ethnic cleansing, sectarian warfare, terrorism, violent crime, or other human rights violations as well as from extreme poverty and disease” (Kaldor 2011: 446). Though human security stands out from the various security forms described by Buzan et al., it engulfs all these forms, as they remain human concerns. However, the emphasis here is laid on the use of violence for protection and not for revenge or oppression. Proponents of this form of security think other security concerns like economic and social security are important but insist that human security should be placed above all because without humans every other aspect of security is invalid (Newman 2010, Tsai 2009). Like critical security studies, human security studies challenge state centric orthodoxy and suggest solutions that might shift policy towards the protection of individuals. Cameroon like most nations apparently has all these security threats, but the research focuses on the military and political threats because they align with the moderating variable. This theory gives the perfect space for analyzing conflict that has the state at its center and that which deals with the use of forceful coercion. Buzan (1991) defines political security as “the organizational stability of states, system of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy” (Buzan et al., 1998: 8).

1. Critical Security Theory

Another concept of security concerns critical security theory and is defined as that which is “conceived broadly to embrace a number of different non-traditional approaches which challenge conventional (military, state-centric) approaches to security studies and security policy” (Newman, 2010, Jarvis and Holland 2014, Vaughan-Williams 2021). Krause and William (1997) also see the study of critical security as broad and involves elements of Marxism, post structuralism, critical theory, and critical constructivism. Like Newman, they agree that this area of study on security examines the idea of security as used by governments and analyzes it. Scholars in this field throw light on some security justifications that governments give to their citizens (Brooks 2019, Fierke 2017, Offner, 2005). In this vein, Newman contends that human security is just “a hegemonic discourse co-opted by the state” (Newman 2010: 77). The line of thought in this area of security studies is

very important to this thesis because it clarifies the ideas expressed in this work, especially the perceived threat. Governments often give the impression that national security is meant to safeguard citizens but nonetheless use violence on protesters who are most times peaceful and unarmed (Flint and Radil 2013, Offner, 2005, Jones 1999). In an age where liberal ideas of democracy and human rights are more popular than ever, governments seem to use security to suppress the expression of these rights under the pretext of protection. To do this, they often claim that they need to limit the liberties of citizens to save democracy especially in cases where people are protesting or rioting against it (Vaughan-Williams 2021, Neocleous, 2008). Still in this line of argument, they claim that they need to strike the right balance between liberties and security. This argument only ends up in the curbing of citizens' liberties and most times little protection or anything that is in the interest of citizens (Agamben 2005). Kaldor (2011: 44) gives the example of the U.S. war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq and argue that the war only provided "new justifications for increasing military budgets again, a new lease of life for intelligence services, and new arguments for cracking down on civil liberties". This assessment apparently reflects many wars on terror around the world. According to Jones (1999) and Said (1994), critical theory, or critical security studies, is for the voiceless, the unrepresented, the powerless, and its purpose is their emancipation.

Some scholars argue that the use of security to curb citizen's rights does not exclude even the most liberal societies. In critiquing liberalism, Neocleous (2008: 9), writes that security expressed by the so-called democratic societies only "reveal the potential for the rehabilitation of fascism, thriving in the crises of liberalism, the fascist potential within liberal democracy has always been more dangerous than the fascist tendency against democracy". He does not just end at analyzing liberalism but also critique realists like Machiavelli and Hobbes arguing that their security centered ideas have influenced the drive of security today. He worries here about their state centered approach that wields power mainly for the maintenance of the state and not for the good will and morality of those, power is given to. This state centered doctrine seems to satisfy governments the most as it gives them much power over individuals. Neocleous (2008: 18) explains that the state centered doctrine started as a means to resolve power struggle between princes, then developed into defending borders (international confrontations), then to defending the interest and security of

the state and finally to national security. This evolution ultimately made security the topmost political concern and interest over all other interests across the various state interests. This has made it possible for intervention in any other societal aspect under the pretext of security. This argument by critical security scholars portrays the happenings in Cameroon and gives the basis to analyze the state centered security approach in the country. Neal (2016) however believes that western political thought and critical security studies in particular have assessed the relationship between security and politics from a negative prism. To him, the two are inseparable. According to Browning and McDonald (2013), critical security studies have not been able to offer a comprehensive, persuasive framework for comprehending the politics or ethics of security but simply suggest that there is a universal security logic that defines possibilities for progress regarding security. According to Robert Cox (1981), critical theories focus on the structure of world orders as opposed to problem-solving theories that accept and analyze the world from a realist point of view. Cox argues that problem solving theory takes the world as it is and attempts to find solutions to problems within it while critical theory raises questions about the historical location of both the theorist and his or her theory. Heath-Kelly (2010) and Reus-Smit (2008) agree and add that critical theories in examining these structures seek to identify and challenge the knowledge produced in problem-solving theories.

2. National Security and State of Exception

When states have the power to hover over everything in the name of security as Neocleous (2008) implies, they often use the state of exception or the state of emergency to assert this power. In a state of exception, governments are given special powers that allow them to transcend existing laws in the name of public good or interest. This exception allows leaders to rule by decree, declare curfews, restrict movements of persons and property, use force and intimidation, and monitor or ban public meetings and gatherings. According to Dillon (2007), Bigo (2006) and Muller (2004), securitization comes with the suspension of normal politics such that the state of exception becomes the norm. Similarly, Aradau (2004), posits that the state of exception poses a danger to democracy because it leaves the possibility of a proliferation of threats that can lead to a normalization of extended state of exceptions. In addition, Behnke (2000) contends that the suspension of normal politics becomes an ethical political choice. However, though there are international

laws that guide the declaration and enforcement of state of exceptions, states seldom adhere to these guidelines as they prioritize their interest (Fierke 2017). The United Nations Human Rights Commission (2005, p. 48) notes that the use of a state of exception should be in extraordinary circumstances, including “armed conflict, rioting, natural disasters or other public emergencies that threaten the life of a nation”. Schmitt (2005) on his part, argues that the state of exception is beyond the normal because it offers the possibility for law and order to be restored. Aradau and Van Munster (2009) also see in this direction and argue that exceptionalism does not just play upon public panics, but also instills fear in the enemy.

The practice of state of exceptions is common with democratic and non-democratic societies but according to Agamben (2005, p. 5) the modern state of exception emanates rather from democratic revolutionary traditions than from an absolute or autocratic system as could be expected. In Neocleous’ view, this is so because liberals argue that there should be a balance between liberties and security. It is expected that democratic societies fully respect the liberties they propagate, but rather, there is blatant disrespect of these rights in the guise of security according to him. Hitler for instance declared a state of exception in Germany for 12 years and it was never repealed by the successive governments and remained legal all through (Giordanengo 2016; Neocleous 2008). It is understood when done by a dictatorship, but it becomes problematic when used by democratic regimes. State of exceptions were meant to allow the military or police to resolve problems in troubled areas, but it gradually became a political tool (Schmitt 2005; Benjamin 2004). In France for instance, the “*État de Siège*” allowed the civil administration to give the military the exclusive authority to put certain areas under siege and bring order in war times or in situations that threaten the lives of people (Bove et al. 2019). However, slowly this became a tool for officials who declared states of exceptions at will. According to Agamben (2005, p. 6), the state of exception has become “a rule and a paradigm of government today” and countries are “permanently under the threat of siege”. Agamben’s statement aptly describes the state of events in Cameroon since the 1950s according to some scholars. To parody Agamben’s view, Fombad (2004: 62) writes, that “*the people of Cameroon, since independence in 1960, have had to endure considerable periods of time under a state of emergency. In fact, the independent state of Cameroon was born amid a state of emergency proclaimed in 1958 and this*

continued in many parts of the country until the late 1970s". According to International Crisis Group (2017), the Anglophone regions were under a "de facto" state of emergency from September 29 to October 3rd of that year though there was no official state of emergency declared.

3. Global War on Terrorism and the New Security Paradigm

After the 9/11 attack on the US, most of the world's politics shifted to security, pushed by the US (Gardner 2005, Zalman and Clarke 2009, Flint & Radil 2013). The US launched several wars in the Middle East and recruited other countries to join the agenda thus changing the terrorism narrative (Stohl 2008). According to Zalman and Clarke (2009) this narrative changed "almost overnight" and became the fore principle of US foreign policy. As Sproat (2008) notes, the recruitment of other countries to join the fight led to other countries adopting the same stance against terrorism in their territories. This put security at the top of most states' interest and gave the basis for political excuses as Neocleous (2008) argues. The US gave the impression that their anti-terrorism war was to protect democracy and freedoms, but Fierke (2017) argues that the campaign rather increased surveillance and arrest authority over the same citizens they claimed to protect. Agamben (2005) goes beyond 2001 and notes that since the two world wars the world has been in a permanent state of exception. Though there were no guns fired in the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union, the tension left the world in constant anticipation of war. According to Neocleous (2008: 7), the security agenda is pushed by liberals who brandish liberty as their motto but in fact their agenda is security because it ensures the safety of the bourgeois society created by capitalists.

4. National Security and State Terrorism

Security scholars over time have been debating on the question of labelling certain states' actions as terrorism. According to Sproat (2008: 22), this difficulty springs from the way states formulate and present their violent activities and from the perplexity involved in distinguishing a state's legitimate activities from actions that can be defined as terrorism. On his part, Stohl (2008: 5) blames this difficulty on scholars that ignore state violent activities and focus on anti-state terrorism even when they acknowledge state terrorism and its "illegality and inhumanity". To him, there must be adequate precision on what can be considered state terrorism in order

to distinguish it from other coercive activities. Dallin and Breslauer (1970, in Barghoorn, 1973) had earlier attempted a definition and described state terrorism as governments' arbitrary use of brutal coercion against individuals or groups. Sproat (2008) however goes into details and precises that "terrorism can be identified as the deliberate threat or use of violence for political purposes by either nonstate actors or the state abroad, when such actions are intended to influence the victim(s) and/or target(s) wider than the immediate victim(s); or the use of such purposive violence by the state within its own borders when such actions either fail to allow the victim prior knowledge of the law and/or distinguish between the innocence and guilt of the individual victim." In his view, three things should be considered when defining terrorism as a whole. These include,

- 1) Motive: which has to do with political rather than private interest,
- 2) intention: if it is to instill fear rather than to simply cause damage,
- 3) status: which grants governments the legal power to control some violent internal activities that would otherwise be deemed terrorist acts if carried out outside, or which also provides the state the power to designate some internal acts as terrorist acts if carried out by someone else on state territory.

Thus, if a state threatens or uses violence against any individual or group in accordance with an indiscriminate "catch all or blanket piece" of legislation, such as in a state of exception that allows arbitral detention, then this legal use of violence by the state could qualify as an act of direct domestic state terrorism (Sproat, 2008: 24). He adds that this applies especially if the threat or use of violence comes with the intention to instill fear given that the individual's innocence will be disregarded. In other words, when a state goes beyond the permissible acts of punishment required to ensure conformity to its laws, the excess action might be classified as state terrorism, particularly if the purpose is to induce fear. At this point, the state is ignoring the principle of *jus in bello*, which requires distinguishing between lawbreakers and ordinary citizens. Nevertheless, Sproat (2008) insists that the legal or illegitimate actions of the state like torture or imprisonment may not necessarily constitute state terrorism if the intention is not to instill fear. To him the aspect of intention in judging state action is principal to the understanding of state terrorism. Blakeley (2012) agrees with Sproat and defines state terrorism as state violence that is used beyond the target to compel citizens to submit to the wishes of the elites and to instill

fear in the population. She adds that this kind of violence is often used to achieve a political purpose like suppressing the opposition. On his part, Primoratz (2004) argues that the monopoly of legitimate violence that states claim does not justify the use of indiscriminate violence especially on innocent civilians.

Stohl (2008) also outlines three reasons why states may engage in terror activities against their own citizens. This he notes is what Weiner (1970) calls the “Expectancy X Value”. This value has to do with “motive” as noted by Sprout and it is what Stohl refers to as the “expected utility theory of motivation”. In this case, states expect that the implementation of certain actions will achieve the goal of the motive. In this regard, excessive coercion is carried out based on:

- 1) the benefits, that the actor would receive from some desired circumstance,
- 2) the actor's beliefs about the probability with which the desired circumstance would be brought about if the actor were to engage in a particular action,
- 3) the actor's beliefs about the probable costs, or negative consequences that it would have to bear as a result of its engaging in that action. It assumes therefore that the greater the relative expected utility of terrorist action for an actor as compared to other forms of governance, the greater is the probability that the actor will engage in terrorist action. (Stohl 2008: 6)

Engaging in such magnitude of violence that can be considered terrorism also comes with a cost according to Stohl (2008). This cost can be in the form of human and resource losses or losses that may emanate from the backlash of other states or the international community. Stohl separates these costs into “response cost and production cost”. Response costs he says are those that might come from the target group or from observers like domestic or foreign audiences. The production cost includes the buying of arms and payment of participants. He, however, adds a third cost, which is the psychological cost. To him, there is the psychological cost of behaving in a manner which most individuals under normal conditions would characterize as unacceptable. Thus, the psychological cost involves (i) the extent to which human life is valued (or conversely, the strength of internalized prohibitions against violence in general) and (ii) the extent to which the victim can be or has been dehumanized in the mind of the violent actor (Stohl 2008: 7-8). The extent to which victims and potential victims can be dehumanized is further affected by two

important factors. (i) the perceived social distance between the government and the victim population and (ii) the extent to which action is routinely and bureaucratically authorized so that personal responsibility is seen by all actors in the decisional chain to be lower for the government in a conflict situation with those they define as “inferior” and/or with a highly bureaucratized coercive machinery. To exemplify this view, Stohl (2008: 8) pointed to the case of al-Qaeda that was portrayed as apocalyptic and hateful, devoid of reasonable political aims and only interested in death and destruction and thus incapable of rational thought or political bargaining. In other words, since the administration views them as terrorists and their organizations are only interested in death and destruction, the obvious strategic conclusion is that they must be eliminated because they cannot be moderated. Campbell (1998) and Offner (2005) also use the example of the US to demonstrate how it represents itself as the defender and others as aggressors.

Furthermore, Kelman (1973) adds a third dimension to the psychological cost, which is the (iii) glorification of violence. According to him, there are categories of people in the state mechanism that propel a view of violence as a glorious activity and a legitimate form of self-expression that is normal and acceptable. To him, the glorification of violence receives some of its strongest reinforcement from the traditional image of the military as a uniquely noble and honorable enterprise. Within this tradition, killing of the enemy is elevated from the status of unavoidable to that of a commendable good (Kelman 1973: 57). In other words, the more productive and proficient a soldier is the more of a hero he becomes. In this regard, Brooks (2019) and Talmadge (2015) argue that the military is likely to intervene in politics when there is an incentive and opportunity. Piplani & Talmadge (2016) adds that the chances increase when the threat is national. Stepan (1978) describes this phenomenon as “new professionalism” given the politicized and expanded role that the military plays in such circumstances. Stohl (2008: 6) thus argues that governments are aware of these costs and frequently consider the price of retaliation or punishment that may be imposed by the target group as well as the costs imposed by other governments because of their actions. As a result, he says governments are forced to be cautious or conceal their coercive activities to avoid diplomatic condemnations, sanctions, or trade embargoes from foreign countries.

Moreover, states are not usually only concerned with keeping foreign countries away from their violent activities but are also concerned with the domestic response. As a result, they try to convince the people that their actions are for their safety and the cost of getting rid of the target is worth the sacrifice (Zalman and Clarke 2009, Agamben 2005). Consequently, in cases where the cost might outweigh the goal in terms of backlash, states turn to “secrecy of action” that reduces their vulnerability to response cost and takes them out of the picture (Stohl, 2008: 7). Accordingly, some governments decide to act through paramilitaries which they distance themselves from or carry out the acts in complete secrecy and blame the acts on others thus justifying the need for more overt terror (Newman 2010, Neocleous 2008). According to Stohl (2008), the U.S. government encouraged and allowed state terrorism through the states that were part of its “Global Coalition Against Terrorism”. He notes that the U.S. provided significant diplomatic praise to its new partners for their assistance in the global war against terrorism. This according to him changed the U.S.’ arms sales and arms sales policies significantly, resulting in an increase in state repression and state terror in the various member countries (Stohl 2008: 5). According to him, most scholars of terrorism consider state violence and terrorism as a separate category of terrorism from that committed by non-state actors. This he says downplayed the increase in terrorism acts promoted by the Global Coalition Against Terrorism initiated by the Bush administration. As mentioned by Sproat (2008), scholars of terrorism have difficulty labelling states’ violent actions as terrorism because of the way states frame their activities. One of the common ways is usually the “raison d’état” (reason of state) which states often present as a just cause and often in the form of national interest (Stohl, 1984). According to him, this excuse may justify the cause but does not justify the means. He argues that national interest, which to him is a dubious concept used by states, only covers the justification (Stohl, 1984: 42).

5. Conceptualization of the Independent Variable

The various concepts and theories explored above all describe Cameroon’s national security approach, but critical security theories best explain the concept of “hammer and lies” as set by the literature. This is because this area of security studies examines the idea of security as used by governments and analyze it. The moderating variable identified in this study as ‘security threat’ is broken into two as

the actual threat and the perceived threat. According to scholars of critical security, the perceived threat aligns with the justifications that governments use to misinform the public while doing the contrary. In Cameroon's case, the government branded unarmed Anglophone and MRC protesters as terrorists, thus justifying the violence that came afterwards. According to Sproat (2008: 22), some scholars find it difficult to distinguish a state's legitimate violent activity from activities that can be defined as terrorism. This he says springs from the way states formulate and present their violent activities. The common excuse used by governments is the "raison d'état" (reason of state) which is often presented as a threat to national interest. According to Neocleous (2008), governments also give the idea that security is the base for freedom, democracy, and the good of the people. As such, more power is given to the state in order to secure the people. As Kaldor (2011: 444) has noted, these justifications often serve to crack down on civil liberties, increase military budgets or add a new lease of life for intelligence services. These excuses are key themes in government communication studied in this research as will be seen in chapter four. In short, the security approach starts with the creation of a security threat, which then justifies the use of force.

Stohl (1984) argues that these excuses may justify the cause but do not justify the means. The means for the most part is usually excessive force which Sproat (2008) says results in state terrorism. However, he notes that qualifying state violence as terrorism should be judged on the motive, the intention, and the status. He notes that the motive should be political rather than private. The moderating variable – armed conflict/crisis - points to government interest which can be motive to use extreme force on protesters. The demand for federalism by Anglophones and MRC's ability to mobilize all come against government's interest in terms of sharing power and bowing to popular pressure. Hence, the motive to forcefully stop the protests. On the intention, Sproat (2008) says it should be considered if the end goal is to instill fear rather than to simply cause damage. When Anglophone protests broke out in 2016, lawyers and students were brutalized by security forces and dispersed, and some were arrested. Social media videos showed students at the University of Buea who were pulled out of their apartments and made to swim in mud. The MRC protests were also met with heavy militarization, brutality, and arrests. This explains that the intention was to instill fear in the protesters. Sproat's

third measure is status, which he says concerns the standing that gives states legal authority over certain violent activities internally, but which would otherwise be considered terrorism if committed abroad or which at the same time gives the state the authority to label such actions as terrorism if committed by another within the territory. In this regard, Human Rights Watch (2019) reported “Cameroonian security forces attacked the village of Abuh, North-West region, in November and burned an entire neighborhood to the ground. Satellite images and photographic evidence obtained by Human Rights Watch show the destruction of up to 60 structures.” In another instance, Amnesty International (2021) reported “at least 22 civilians were killed in Ngarbuh in the night of 13 to 14 February 2020, including 15 children and two pregnant women, following a military operation.” The government has described similar cases carried out by separatists as terrorism, which in Sprout’s view will also make government action terrorism.

Stohl (2008) further notes that engaging in such magnitude of violence that can be considered terrorism also comes with a cost, which are response cost, and production cost. Response costs he says are those that might come from the target group or from observers like domestic or foreign audiences. The literature has shown that Cameroon has been doing everything possible since the start of the Anglophone conflict to avoid the response cost that comes from the international community. According to O’Donnell and Gramer (2018), the Biya government has been paying powerful international lobbying firms to “fix” the country’s image in the international community. Roberts (2022) approves this view and adds that the “lies” in the “hammer and lies” national security approach is to divert the attention of the international community from the government’s violent activities. The psychological cost according to Stohl (2008) involves (i) the extent to which human life is valued and (ii) the extent to which the victim can be or has been dehumanized in the mind of the violent actor (Stohl 2008: 7). In government’s communication examined in this thesis, there is the extensive use of the words terrorist and neutralize. From the perspective on the global war on terrorism shown in the literature, when an individual or group is described as terrorist, the obvious strategic conclusion is usually that they must be eliminated because they lack reason and only aim to destroy. According to Beseng et al., the government has been seeking a military victory over the separatists since the start of the armed conflict and has rejected

genuine dialogue. The government has repeatedly noted that “there is no negotiation with terrorists” and the way out is for them to drop arms or be killed (Biya, 2019). In this regard, the individuals or groups have been dehumanized in the government’s eyes. Moreover, Konings and Nyamnjoh (2019) adds that the successive governments had adopted a “workman’s” approach towards the Anglophone efforts to draw attention to their worries and saw every problem as a “nail” to which the solution is a “hammer”. Similarly, the country’s minister of Territorial Administration, Paul Atanga, described the country’s national security approach as a blender and the people as ingredients that can be compressed into a paste by the blender. This suggests the extent to which the people have been dehumanized in the government’s eyes.

Furthermore, Stohl (2008: 8) notes that the extent to which victims and potential victims can be dehumanized is further affected by two important variables. (i) the perceived social distance between the government and the victim population and (ii) the extent to which action is routinely and bureaucratically authorized, so that personal responsibility is perceived, by all actors in the decisional chain, to be lower for governments (1) in a conflict situation with those they define as “inferior” and/or (2) with a highly bureaucratized coercive machinery. Konings and Nyamnjoh imagery of “workman’s” approach explains the social distance the government has with the Anglophone especially on the issue of the Anglophone problem. As seen in the literature, the major Anglophone complaint over the years has been marginalization and the second-class citizen treatment received from the successive governments. This also explains the social distance between the people and the government. In addition, while MRC members and Anglophone protesters were shot and tortured in the streets, CPDM protesters were guided by security officers each time they were counter protesting the MRC or Anglophones (Freedom House, 2022). This also illustrates another social distance between the government and the protesters.

Furthermore, Kelman (1973) adds a third dimension to the psychological cost, which is the (iii) glorification of violence. According to him, there are categories of people in the state mechanism that propel a view of violence as a glorious activity and a legitimate form of self-expression that is normal and acceptable. The imagery of “blender and ingredients” expressed by the minister of

Territorial Administration while describing the security approach that will be used to fight crime aligns with Kelman's view of glorifying violence. In the studied government communication, most government officials are seen to always threaten protesters with the use of violence. According to Kelman, the glorification of violence receives some of its strongest reinforcement from the traditional image of the military as a uniquely noble and honorable enterprise. Killing of the enemy is elevated from the status of unavoidable to that of a commendable good and the productive soldiers are celebrated (Kelman, 1973: 57). According to O'Donnell and Gramer (2018), Biya has been rewarding the military greatly for their loyalty. In agreement, Takougang (2003) adds that he has been protecting their social and economic privileges, especially those of high-ranking officers, and by granting them a highly visible role in national politics. In return, for these favors from the regime, Fonchingong (1998) writes that the military has ensured that the opposition be suppressed by continuously harassing and intimidating them.

Furthermore, Stohl (2008) adds that states are also concerned with the domestic response cost as well. He notes that they try to avoid it by trying to convince the people that their actions are for their safety and the cost of getting rid of the "terrorists" is worth the sacrifice. One of the recurrent themes in government communication between 2014 and 2023 was "security of the people". The government constantly reminded the people that their violent actions in the Anglophone regions were to secure the people. According to Stohl (2008:7), in cases where the cost might outweigh the goal in terms of backlash, states turn to "secrecy of action" that reduces their vulnerability to response cost and takes them out of the picture. Accordingly, some governments decide to act through paramilitaries which they distance themselves from or carry out the acts in complete secrecy and blame the acts on others thus justifying the need for more terror. In the Ngarbuh case reported by Human Rights Watch, the government blamed the act on separatists until national and international pressure forced them to investigate and admit it (Sadi, 2020b). In another incident in Mbengwi still in the NW region where 13 civilians including children were killed and 20 houses burnt, the government denied the actions even though Human Rights Watch provided satellite images showing the military in action (Kindzeka, 2021). Thus, this thesis will adopt the "Hammer and Lies" security approach as described by the literature. Therefore, the research will be looking for

the effect of the “Hammer and Lies” (independent variable) on the dependent variables – democracy and governance.

6. D. Dependable Variables: Democracy and Governance

According to Article 1 section (2) of the Constitution of Cameroon:

“The Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary State. It shall be one and indivisible, secular, democratic and dedicated to social service. It shall recognize and protect traditional values that conform to democratic principles, human rights, and the law. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law.”

In addition, section (16) of the Preamble guarantees the freedom of communication, of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, and of trade unionism, as well as the right to strike under the conditions fixed by law.

Furthermore, article 2 sections (1) and (2) provide that:

(1) National sovereignty shall be vested in the people of Cameroon who shall exercise it either through the President of the Republic and Members of Parliament or by way of referendum. No section of the people or any individual shall arrogate to itself or to himself the exercise thereof. (2) The authorities responsible for the management of the state shall derive their powers from the people through election by direct or indirect universal suffrage, unless otherwise provided for in this Constitution.

According to Moghadam (2013: 393), written constitutions serve as a guarantee to citizens that the government is required to act in a certain way and uphold certain rights. This sets the base to consider Cameroon as a democracy. More so, as shown in the literature, The Economist (2019), indicated that Cameroon has put democratic institutions in place, but lacks the will to implement them. This can be seen in the presence of the electoral body (Elecam), the Constitutional Council, ratified international treaties on human rights and freedoms, etc. The lack of willingness mentioned by The Economist is shown in the literature to come from the government’s need to make political gains. According to Markoff (1999), democracy has never been a finished thing, but has been continually renewed, redefined, and reinvented. In other words, democracy has no definite form and is a work in progress. However, what is democracy?

According to Waligorski (1990), there are about twelve types of democracies, which include liberal democracy, constitutional democracy, participatory democracy, direct democracy, representative democracy, economic democracy, social democracy, elite democracy, majoritarian democracy, mass democracy, limited democracy, and people's democracy. He adds that there are military juntas claiming to restore democracy, which also constitutes a form of democracy.

Democracy is commonly defined in Abraham Lincoln's words as "government of the people, by the people, for the people" (Lincoln 1863). However, the debate of who "the people are" remains a point of contention in academic discourses. In fact, every definition of the term centers on the people. Social contract thinkers like Locke and Rousseau assume that in a democratic system, there is a contract binding the people and the government. This contract seems to be absent in many states that claim to be democratic. On the question of the people governing, Lijphart (1999) raises a pertinent question that touches on the case of Cameroon. In the case of disagreement and divergent preferences, Lijphart questions whose interest the government will prioritize and who the government is in such a case if government is by the people. If the majoritarian model takes precedence, does it really address the idea of the people? This boils down to the question of a fixed definition of democracy. According to Economist Intelligent Unit (2022), the fundamental features of a democracy include government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed; the existence of free and fair elections; the protection of minority rights; respect for basic human rights; equality before the law; due process and political pluralism. Thus, they define democracy as a set of practices and principles that institutionalize, and thereby, ultimately, protect freedom. Nevertheless, they question if these basic features can adequately define democracy. Moghadam (2013) on his part defines democracy as a political regime that provides citizens a range of civil, political, social, and economic rights that are institutionalized, and which citizens participate through the formal political process, civil society, social movements and have values of tolerance, participation, and solidarity. According to him, democracy as a concept is different from Liberal democracy, which is "a system of government in which those who hold public political office are chosen through regularly held competitive elections in which all adult citizens possessing legal capacity may freely participate by casting equally

weighted votes” (Moghadam, 2013). On their part, Herre et al (2013), see democracy as a system that gives citizens the right to influence important decisions over their own lives and allows them to hold their leaders accountable.

On his part, David Held (2006: 1) defines democracy in contrast to monarchies and aristocracies and claims that contrary to these two, the people rule in a democracy. This however raises the question of what makes a democracy what it is said to be? Most developing democracies exhibit characteristics of the regime types raised by Held and make it difficult to say if they are democracies or something else. In some countries for instance, elected president rule for more than two or three decades and pass the presidency to their children, as was the case of Omar Bongo of Gabon whose son took over after his demise. Ali Bongo must have come to power through institutional establishments, but it gives a picture of a monarchy and questions the various definitions of democracy. According to Held, proponents of democracy claim that it is a good alternative to other regime types because “it comes close to achieving rightful authority, political equality, liberty, moral self-development, the common interest, a fair moral compromise, binding decisions that take everyone’s interest into account, social utility, the satisfaction of wants and efficient decisions” (Held 2006: 2-3). This cannot be more utopian. This view takes away the fact that dictatorships offer most of these positives and that most democracies are far from achieving them. As Held notes, these advocates argue that the pillars of democracy are common good and self-government. Schumpeter disagrees with this view and sees democracy as a process of selecting public officials. According to Schumpeter, democracy is the “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (in Hardy, 1945). This view very much describes most democracy or as some choose to call it, elective democracy.

7. Democracy Indicators

According to ELff and Ziaja (2018), the Arab Spring and the recent backsliding of some previous democracies like Turkey, Russia, Hungary, Venezuela, Poland, etc. to authoritarianism have boosted increased interest in assessing and measuring the effectiveness of democracies in the modern world. However, measuring democracy dates back to the 1960s and 1970s when certain individuals

and institutions first began computing democracy metrics. This according to Berg-Schlosser (2004) was inspired by the collapse of the socialist system and the emergence of new democracies. These measurements try to identify, quantify, and contrast successful and unsuccessful democracies, strong or weak democracies, or simply differentiate democracies from authoritarian regimes. In Munck's (2014) view, discussions on the quality of democracy are merely revisions of democracy definitions, which have been widely acceptable since the Second World War. The discussions are aimed at narrowing the gap between the ideal of democracy and what is demanded in practice of countries that aspire to be called democracies. In this regard, Lijphart (2011) suggests that the measurement of the quality of democracy should take into account two prior judgements: (1) making sure that, in terms of institutional characteristics, a country is sufficiently democratic, and that, as a minimum, it has universal suffrage, and (2) that a country's democracy has been uninterrupted for a minimum number of years. To him, higher democratic quality can be attributed to institutional characteristics of consensus democracy, especially proportional representation.

However, according to Berg-Schlosser (2004), measuring democracy can only be accurate if there is a new concept of democracy that is well advanced, largely accepted and analytically activated to represent the various modern indicators of this regime type. According to him, this differentiation ought to be sufficiently distinct from other types of political systems to be able to identify important differences between them. At the same time, this concept should be able to connect with present sub-types and prospective future developments on the topic. He goes on to say that this is possible if a foundational theory or what he refers to as a "root concept" that meets these criteria and makes it possible to build further variations that support generalizations is developed. In his view, Robert Dahl's idea of "polyarchy" would be a good foundational theory or "root concept" for democracy. Polyarchy according to Dahl (1989) is the rule by more than one person but which allows the implementation of democratic principles. He outlines eight requirements or component of such a government (in Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022):

- Almost all adult citizens have the right to vote.
- Almost all adult citizens are eligible for public office.
- Political leaders have the right to compete for votes.

- Elections are free and fair.
- All citizens are free to form and join political parties and other organisations.
- All citizens are free to express themselves on all political issues.
- Diverse sources of information about politics exist and are protected by law.
- Government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

According to Berg-Schlosser (2004), though various authors have different formulations and interpretations of Dahl's concept, three major variables from his polyarchy are widely acknowledged as the "root concept" of democracy today. (i) the amount of regular and open competition in a political system, (ii) the extent of different forms of participation in the process of political decision-making by the population of a given society, and (iii) basic civil liberties such as freedom of information, organization, speech, etc. and a political order that guarantees and maintains the rule of law to allow for regular political contestation and participation. In other words, the contribution of political systems, required institutional framework and legal framework. Berg-Schlosser however argues that beyond these three main but broad theoretical categories, there are also other important distinctions and criteria that must be employed to "properly" measure democracy. These particularities touch on the purpose of the study, the method, and the research instruments. These distinctions play a big role in the orientation and inference of the measurement. According to Economist Intelligent Unit (2022), there is no consensus on how democracy is measured but most indexes agree with the three points indicated by Berg-Schlosser above. This indicates that purpose plays a vital role. According to Berg-Schlosser (2004), the purpose could be:

- 1) The development of an inclusive typology of political systems that includes "democratic" forms among them.
- 2) The development and measurement of concrete sub-types of democratic political systems, e.g. presidential or parliamentary, majoritarian, or consensual ones etc.
- 3) To further the improvement and qualification of democratic systems in a functional or normative sense, which identifies certain deficiencies or articulates desired further options, considering the purpose will not only

ensure the empirical alignment but will also cover democracy theories that are normatively and philosophically motivated.

- 4) Tracking the performance of numerous democratic metrics over time in different regions or countries. This might be done by evaluating the evolution or development of democracy, or by examining all-important elements of a modern democracy and developing criticisms and policy recommendations.
- 5) To assess the quality of the relevant measures and indices that must be respected for validity and reliability purposes.

There are multiple democracy indexes today, but this research will focus on those that are widely used to understand how democracy is measured and how it fits in as the dependent variable. The classifications are often done with the aid of research questions that address the performance of the various variables. Below are some of the indexes and the factors they consider in measuring democracy and governance.

a. Tatu Vanhanen

Tatu Vanhanen is one of the pioneers to measure democracy and leans towards Dahl's indicators. He bases his measurement on two variables: political participation and competition. In his 1997 index, he examined accessible electoral statistics from 172 nations with some dating back to the 19th century. He measured the degree of participation by considering the number of actual voters in successive elections compared to the general population. He then measured the level of competitiveness in elections by subtracting the total number of votes gained by the leading party in national parliamentary elections from 100. Then he further multiplied both measures by each other and divided the outcome by 100 to get a figure on 100. The aggregate number was considered the country's democracy score (Vanhanen, 1997). To him, the multiplication of the two measures prevents the possibility of one variable showing a high turnout with no competition. In other words, the two indicators complement each other.

Berg-Schlusser (2004) contends that this technique ignores the reality that some nations, such as Brazil or Belgium, have mandatory voter registration and/or voting, giving them a higher score on this index. He further argues that the vote percentage of the largest party in parliament may also cause some distortions

favouring highly fragmented party systems with numerous tiny parties because of the corresponding election systems, such as highly proportional ones. In his view, a high score does not necessarily mean that a country is democratic given that democracy is not only based on election.

b. Jagers and Gurr

Jagers and Gurr (1996) based their measurement of what they term “institutionalised democracy” on eight indicators: the regulation of political participation, the competitiveness of political participation, constraints on the executives, the regulation of executive recruitment, the competitiveness of the executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, the centralization of state authority and monocratic (Jagers and Gurr, 1996). In this study, they measured democracy by contrasting democracy and autocracy. In their previous study in 1990, they had also measured in addition to others: the complexity of authority structures, the openness of the recruitment of the chief executive and the regulation and centralization of state authorities’ control of social and economic activities (directiveness). They coded these indicators separately and scored each between 0 and 10. They studied 157 countries stretching far back to the 19th century like Vanhanen and to the dates of independence for younger countries (Jagers and Gurr, 1996). They also used the various country constitutions and regions in which the countries are found as a basis of measurement.

In response, Berg-Schlosser (2004) argues that this approach is limited in its focus on the institutional side of democracy, which neglects certain broader aspects of social and political reality such as the extent and kind of actual participation or the observance of civil liberties and human rights. According to him, this measurement tends to take some of the coded features of the “institutional democracies” more at their face value without being able to assess their substance and actual performance. He sees the data as judgemental and favourable to an American type of democracy that strictly separates power. To him, other sources are needed to reduce coding bias.

c. Freedom House

Freedom House has been measuring democratic performance since the 1970s and bases its measurements on five key indicators: political pluralism and participation, civil liberties, rule of law, electoral process, and government

functioning (Freedom House, 2022). Accordingly, points are awarded to each country or territory in a range of zero (0) to four (4). For each of 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators, which take the form of questions; a score of zero (0) represents the smallest degree of freedom and four (4), the greatest degree of freedom. The political rights questions are grouped into three subcategories: Electoral Process (three questions), Political Pluralism and Participation (4), and Functioning of Government (3). The civil liberties questions are grouped into four subcategories: Freedom of Expression and Belief (four questions), Associational and Organizational Rights (3), Rule of Law (4), and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights (4). The political rights section also contains an additional discretionary question addressing forced demographic change. (Freedom House, 2022).

According to Elff and Ziaja (2018), Freedom House in a strict sense is not an index of democracy but its measure of civil liberties and political rights cover important dimensions of democratic systems. On the other hand, Economist Intelligence Unit (2022) considers Freedom House as “the best-known measure” of democracy now. However, the institution agrees with Elff and Ziaja that freedom is a necessary component of democracy but is not adequate in and of itself. The institution believes that metrics of democracy that represent the level of political freedoms and civil rights are insufficient. To them, these indicators do not include enough, or in some cases, any, of the characteristics that define how substantial democracy is. They argue that existing measures simply take political engagement and government functioning into consideration in a marginal and formal fashion (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022).

d. Economist Intelligence Unit

This relatively new index started the measurement of democracy in 2006 and evaluate 165 countries and territories. The organization bases its measurement on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties. There are 60 indicators under these five categories and based on this, countries are rated on a zero (0) to 10 scale. Based on its scores, each country is then classified as one of four types of regimes: “full democracy”, “flawed democracy”, “hybrid regime” or “authoritarian regime”. The scoring is further evaluated on four categories that are: (i) free and fair elections, (ii) voter safety, (iii) the impact of foreign powers on government and (iv) ability of civil

service to put policy into action. Points are deducted from the major indicators in cases where a country scores zero (0) in three or four of the above categories.

8. Problems with Measurement

a. Data bases and available sources of information

Berg-Schlosser (2004) asserts that when it comes to official election data, such as those used by Vanhanen, the results are essentially taken at face value without considering the openness, freedom, and fairness of the elections. While this view makes sense given the fact that there are usually election malpractices in most countries, it also helps to measure the political participation rate. This method will work in the case of Cameroon, given that official results showed a significant low turnout. Berg-Schlosser adds that younger democracies often have weaker reliable sources of information and as a result, “High correlations” in measures in these regions might hide strong inconsistencies and give undeserved scores to certain countries.

Still in line with source of information and coding, Elff and Ziaja (2018) cites the case of Freedom House index, which in the beginning was coded by a single person (Raymond Gastil), who in their view had limited sources of information and “some inevitable bias”. They argue that though the coding system and the data sources have become more elaborate, there is still a certain degree of subjectivity in the coding and weighting procedures. In their assessment, they conclude that Freedom House exhibits less bias on the cross-section but fails in their sources of evaluating change. They argue that Freedom House’s “self-declared mission” to defend human rights and promote democratic change could inspire speculation that temporal distortions in Freedom House data are indeed intentional, with the aim to spur regime change (Elff and Ziaja, 2018: 120). This view aligns with the importance of “purpose” in these measurements as indicated by Berg-Schlosser (2004). The purpose determines the variables and methods to be considered.

b. Aggregating factors of democracy

According to Elff and Ziaja (2018: 120), change in democracy is hard to measure especially in what they call “softer dimensions” of political and civil rights. To them, aggregation does not give a real representation of democracy given that a high score in one area like civil liberties does not make up for a low score in another

area like elections. They argue that the measure of democracy is mostly subjective since those from without the system or country cannot control the reliability. On his part, Berg-Schlosser (2004) prefers Vanhanen's aggregation approach to others because his multiplication shows that if one dimension has a value of zero the entire score is also zero. In his view, others simply put together things that do not fall in the same category to determine the strength of democracy. Bollen (1993) sees aggregation as a "method bias" used by institutions or individuals that aim to influence change with their measurements. In his view, these indexes use incomplete information and the aggregation of unrelated indicators to portray the state of democracy in a country (Bollen, 1993: 1213). On their part, Pickel et al. (2015) argue that, though a high level of aggregation reduces the amount of data and eases interpretation, comparability, and application, it also reduces the validity of the measurement. This they explain that aggregation oversimplifies the scores and conceals the systematic differences that may exist between the various cases regarding certain attributes.

c. Democratic and non-democratic systems

According to Berg-Schlosser (2004), these indices use democratic dimensions to measure other distinct political system types, for e.g. of traditional monarchies, military dictatorships, communist one-party states, or other types of authoritarian regimes. In a broad sense, these are all not more or less democratic, but qualitatively different. This to him is like measuring the banana content of apples and oranges. In his view, if the respective measured dimensions are kept apart and their values assessed across these different system types, then it will make sense to measure and compare the degree of participation, of competitiveness, of civil liberties, etc. in the respective regimes, as one can measure the varying water or sugar content of different types of fruit. This will make sense for countries that identify as monarchies or military dictatorships but will be misleading for a country that identifies as democracy although the measurement shows otherwise. Freedom house for instance ranks Cameroon as a dictatorship but the country's constitution describes it as a democratic country. In this regard, Lijphart (2011) insists that there must be a minimum threshold for institutional democracy below which a country does not qualify as a democracy. Though he says that he cannot define the threshold, he adds that it is senseless to discuss the quality of democracy in countries whose institutions

and rules are not sufficiently democratic. As an example of such flawed considerations, he observes that both Polity and Freedom House measurements place almost all stable and consolidated democracies in the same category with the highest ranking and this does not give a clear picture of the quality of democracy. Similarly, Herre et al. (2013) argue that some countries that are or were considered democracies were simply electoral democracies where citizens could vote but had no individual and minority rights. In their view, no country could be meaningfully described as a democracy in the late 18th century because citizens were not allowed to choose their political leaders. Even in the 19th century, the countries that had elections could not be sufficiently categorized as democracy. According to them, the world today is about evenly split between autocracies and democracies and most non-democracies are electoral autocracies.

d. Scope of democracy

According to Berg-Schlosser (2004), none of the indices so far, or not even all of them combined in some way, has covered all relevant dimensions of democracy in an all-inclusive and advanced manner. To him, each index is at best a partial measure of some dimensions of democracy, and to some extent, supplement each other in a disaggregated way. However, combining more dimensions may become even more problematic. He notes that even with factor analysis to identify some common broader dimensions, a more comprehensive and consistent data base will still be needed. Economist Intelligent Unit (2022), which argues that though “freedom” and “democracy” are often used interchangeably by these measurements parodies the view that they are not synonymous. This indicates that freedom is a separate category of democracy that can be explored extensively, however, individually. Democracy can be seen as a set of practices and principles that institutionalise, and thereby, ultimately, protect freedom. Economic Intelligence Unit thus questions if a simple reference to the basic feature of democracy is sufficient for a satisfactory concept of democracy. Munk (2014) agrees with this view and suggests that there needs to be a thorough research focus on the quality of democracy. In his view, most scholars segregate the concepts of democracy and quality of democracy, and mistakenly suggest that they have different referents.

Lijphart (2011) on his part notes that though universal suffrage remains a key necessity or condition for the measurement of democracy, it is usually disregarded or

not treated in the real sense. To him, scholars make the same mistake as politicians and refer to the United States as the oldest democracy when in effect there was no universal suffrage until the 1965 Voting Rights Act. He refers to his former democracy assessments in which he treated Switzerland, Australia, and the United States as stable democracies from 1945 on. This he says were erroneous because before 1971 in Switzerland, women were not allowed to vote just like the Aboriginals in Australia before 1962 and African Americans in the United States before 1965. This raises the question of political participation and legitimacy of the elected. According to Lijphart (2011), proportional representation is both a strong influence for democratic quality and can be regarded as qualitatively superior to majoritarian elections that is considered in most measurements.

9. Justice and Democracy in Nation-building

Democracy in its simplest form associates governance with the people. Proponents of democracy have suggested that democracy allows for freedoms and rights, implying that democratic societies are relatively just. According to Van Parijs (1996: 114), there is compatibility between democracy and justice, not because democracy directly results in justice but because of carefully crafted institutions, which to him are “sometimes frankly Machiavellian institutional engineering”. In his view, these crafted democratic institutions do not only end at preserving democracies but also ensure that the world is a bit more just than it was before the institutions. Delmas (2018: 24) on her part suggests that democracies can ensure just societies because people in reasonable democracies will not support corrupt institutions or accept laws that deny fellow citizens free and equal status in society. To her, “the duty of justice demands resisting injustice, bettering institutions, and frustrating wrongs, and it supports principled disobedience in the process”. Shapiro (1996: 580) though agreeing that democracy is necessary in ordering social relations justly, cautions that democracy alone is not sufficient and should not be seen as the “highest human good” or be made to dominate every other activity. Democracies should set mechanism of institutional governance that will ensure the functioning of other things including justice, he argues.

10. Governance and Good Governance

According to the World Bank (2004), governance refers to the “traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored, and replaced, (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies, and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them”. In a similar way, Plumptre and Graham (1999: 2) defines governance as the “interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say”. On its part, the Commission on Global Governance (1992) defines governance as “the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs”. In more simple terms, the Institute on governance describes governance as a determinant of “who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voice heard and how account is rendered”. Keping (2017) goes a step further and describes governance as “a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond the Government”. According to him, an institution that is recognized by the public becomes a center of power and can exercise governance. In other words, governance does not only involve the central government but other levels of power in both the public and private sector.

These definitions align considerably with democratic principles, suggesting that democracy and governance go together. Keping (2017) agrees with this view and notes “good governance is organically combined with democracy”. He argues that democracy is the only practical mechanism that can uphold the wholly free and equal political power owned by citizens. Przeworski and Limongi (1993) however differ with this view in terms of economic growth, distribution of wealth and social welfare. According to them, other regime types can also provide the basic needs of the citizens to their satisfaction and allow them the same freedoms as in a democracy. The belief that governance can only be achieved in a democracy as implied by Keping above may have come from the separation of government from the people. According to Plumptre and Graham (1999: 2) the separation between governance and government only came into place when government was considered an organization away from the citizens. This separation thus puts the government at

the center of power contradicting the idea that the people own power in a democracy. Nevertheless, it makes it possible to identify responsibility in governance.

Furthermore, governance is not only limited to government but spreads across social and economic spheres. According to Keping (2017), “governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues”. In his view, this involves the transfer of responsibilities to the private sector organizations and voluntary groups. The body of government is necessarily the public institution in a society, while the body of governance can be either a public institution, a private one, or even a cooperation between the two. In other words, governance is the cooperation between a political state and its civil society, the government and non-governmental organizations, public and private institutions. This cooperation can be mandatory or voluntary. It is mainly characterized by “contracting, rather than supervision; decentralization, rather than centralization; administration by the State, rather than redistribution by the State; management based on market principles, rather than management by administrative departments; cooperation between the State and private sectors, rather than being guided by the State” (Keping, 2017). This description aligns with the demands of the various financial houses like the World Bank and the IMF that used governance as a measurement for granting development funds beginning in the 1980s. From this the concept of good governance was born. It is thus no doubt that the definitions of governance favor democracy because the proponents of good governance in the 1980s were those pushing for democratization.

a. Good governance

Keping (2017) outlines six determinants of good governance as follows: Legitimacy, Transparency, Accountability, Rule of law, Responsiveness and Effectiveness. In his view, “good governance refers to the public administration process that maximizes public interest”. ESCAP (2009) on its part outlines eight characteristics of good governance including participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, equitable and inclusive and respect for the rule of law. It adds that good governance, minimal corruption, includes minorities and consider their voices and that of the most vulnerable in decision-making. Nevertheless, the organization notes that good governance is an ideal that has never been met by any country, but which should be aimed by every society for

human development. These determinants have been the criteria for granting aid to mostly African countries including Cameroon. This, however, did not stop the country from scoring very low in governance classifications. In 2020, both the Global Governance Index and Transparency international ranked Cameroon 149th out of 180 in governance classification, with 180 being the worst case. With the security situation in the country between 2014 and 2023, governance was further threatened as the government had more advantage to exercise power through security policies.

11. Conceptualization

As indicated by Berg-Schlosser (2004), a root concept of democracy must be open to integrating sub-forms. Without this, discussion on democracy might simply be about one and would not adequately capture the idea. Thus, to consider Cameroon as a democracy and measure the effect of national security on it, a concept of democracy must be developed based on the constitutional provisions available to the country or those provided for by the law. The discourse on democracy shows that it centers on political participation and competition, freedoms, and rule of law. The country's constitution provides that Cameroon shall be a democratic country that shall respect democratic principles, human rights, law and shall ensure equality of all citizens before the law. The freedoms include freedom of communication, of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, and of trade unionism, as well as the right to strike under the conditions fixed by law. Furthermore, it confers national sovereignty to the people and provides equality to all. In addition, it provides that this sovereignty shall be managed by individuals who derive their powers from the people through election by direct or indirect universal suffrage, unless otherwise provided for by the very constitution.

These provisions very much meet up with the modern definition of democracy that includes various freedoms, political participation and competition and the rule of law. In this regard, this thesis will define democracy as a system that allows political participation and competitiveness, processes of rule of law, respect of human rights and freedoms. This definition will grant that Cameroon be judged against its constitution. More so, three of the indexes examined above also measure government functioning besides other democracy indicators. This connects democracy and governance and depicts governance as the implementation of democracy. Although some scholars argue that democracy does not guarantee good

governance, the concept has evolved to cover most of what is considered as good governance. For example, Keping (2017) and ESCAP’s (2009) indicators of good governance include legitimacy, transparency, rule of law, equity, inclusiveness, participatory and effectiveness which all appear in most democracy measurements examined in this research. Moreso, the World Bank’s (2004) definition of governance also includes the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored, and replaced (elections) and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. These aspects are also provided by Cameroon’s constitution in relation to democracy. According to Keping (2017), the higher the degree of legitimacy in a democracy, the more effective good governance will be. The definitions of governance center on the interaction of government and the people and how the people participate. This aspect leans towards the definition of democracy as government by the people. Thus, governance is defined within the context provided by Cameroon. Therefore, governance is the processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say and the processes by which those in authority are selected, monitored, and replaced. The appointment of members of the Constitutional Council and their role in the election process as seen in the literature gives an idea of how governance is exercised in Cameroon and especially between 2014 and 2023. The persistent military approach to every issue in the country as expressed in the literature also points to the distance between the government and the people and explains the state of governance.

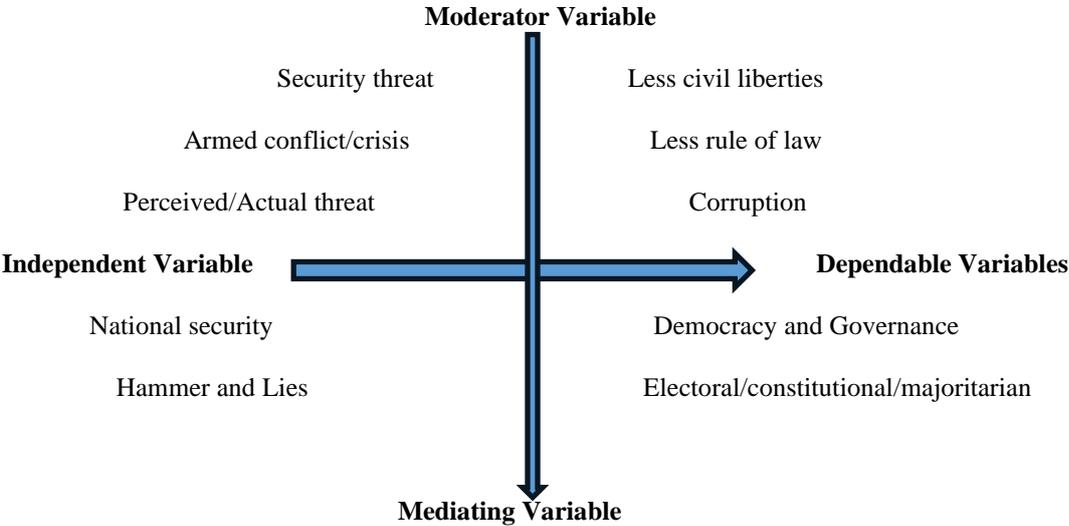


Figure 2: Conceptualization

H0 – National security has no effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

H1 – National security has a positive effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

H2 – National security has a negative effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

The presence of an armed conflict or threat increases the likelihood of more violence in the national security approach. More so, if there are elections in a conflict period, the use of national security increases, thereby affecting the process of democracy and the quality of governance.

IV. POLITICS OF SECURITY IN CAMEROON

The purpose of this study is to examine how people in power use national security to make political gains. The study focuses on Cameroon between 2014 and 2023. The researcher used content analysis techniques to examine government communication regarding the various security crises faced by Cameroon between 2014 and 2023. Through this examination, the researcher came across the following themes: Security of the people, The unity narrative, Lack of will to address major issues, Agenda setting, Praise for country's democracy, Military vs terrorist, Government above the law, Praise for the head of state.

These themes were derived mostly from the frequent occurrence of words in the various government communications. The words or phrases were then grouped by their nearness in meaning to form themes. These themes were further grouped based on the larger connotation denoted by these words, phrases, or sentences, hence, the above themes. The word "terrorist" for instance appeared 33 times in 10 documents and 11 times in one document. Words like "democracy" and "unity" also appear in almost all the documents. These words were then fused to form a single theme. The researcher studied 42 speeches and press releases from the government, specifically from the Presidency, the Ministry of Communication, the Ministry of Territorial Administration (including those from regional and divisional administrators), the Ministry of External Relations and the Ministry of Defense. The selection of themes was guided by the research question: How does national security affect democracy and governance in Cameroon? This chapter will be written in three phases. First the chapter will present the findings obtained through the qualitative content analysis technique, followed by the analysis and lastly the effects of national security on democracy and governance.

A. Content Analysis Findings

The following themes were found and abbreviated as seen below. The abbreviations are to aid the understanding of the visual representation as

demonstrated in the tables.

Table 1: Themes and abbreviations

Security of the people	(SOTP)
The unity narrative	(TUN)
Reluctance to Address Major Concerns	(RTAMC)
Agenda setting	(AS)
Praise for country’s democracy	(PFCD)
Military vs terrorist	(MT)
Government above the law	(GATL)
Praise for head of state	(PFHS)
The sources of the selected documents:	
Presidency of the Republic	(PR)
Ministry of Communication	(MINCOM)
Ministry of Defense	(MINDEF)
Ministry of External Relations	(MINREX)
Ministry of Territorial administration	(MINAT)

Table 2: Visual demonstration of themes

Themes	Sources of Documents				
	PR	MINCOM	MINDEF	MINREX	MINAT
SOTP	f	f	f	f	f
TUN	f	f		f	f
RBTAf	f	f	f	f	f
LOWTAMC	f	f		f	f
AS	f	f	f	f	f
PFCD	f	f		f	f
MT	f	f	f	f	f
GATL		f	f		f
PFHS		f		f	f

(f) stands for themes found in documents selected from the various government departments. Over 90% of the documents from each department had the themes represented above.

B. Analysis

This section breaks down the themes derived from the study of the selected documents. Some themes overlap but are separated for the purpose of emphasis and clarity.

1. Agenda Setting

Wu and Coleman (2009: 776) define agenda setting as “the phenomenon of the mass media selecting certain issues and portraying them frequently and prominently, which leads people to perceive those issues as more important than others”. This phenomenon is not only limited to the media but also extends to politics as explained by critical security theories. The samples selected for this study indicate that since the start of the Anglophone crisis in 2016, the government of Cameroon embarked on an agenda to present the protests and protesters as a negative force. This image continued with the MRC post-electoral protests in 2018. The language in the documents is framed in a way that it either degrades the protests and protesters or gives the impression that the actions of the government are for the good of the people. In describing the protesters and their protests, the government uses words and phrases like terrorists, hidden agenda, destabilizing the country, unpatriotic, and others. However, while talking about their actions on the other hand, the government uses words like republican, territorial integrity, law and order, security of the people and others. This usage aims at instilling an image of good in the government and bad in the protesters and their protests. This aligns with Stohl’s (2008) psychological cost, which he says involves dehumanization of the other person in order to justify a military approach. It also involves the invalidation of the other’s cause to make it seem senseless. A good example of government agenda setting is seen in the use of the word “federalism”. After the Anglophone Consortium demanded for a return to federalism, the government in its communication immediately interpreted the word to mean “secession”. The Minister of Communication Issa Tchiroma even followed up by banning discussions on the topic over public platforms (Freedom House, 2020). This approach was aimed at discouraging the idea of federalism and instilling fear in the advocates as they could face the law on secession and terrorism. This also builds the perceived threat that is used as a national security excuse because the cause has been justified as dangerous to the nation.

Closely related to the interpretation of federalism is government’s use of the words “hidden agenda” and “terrorists”. The labelling of federalism as secession was often accompanied by the phrase hidden agenda, denoting that federalism was just a cover for secession. In the case of MRC protests, the government presented them as a force for destruction. In one of the many government outings to denounce their

protests, the Minister of Territorial Administration Atanga Nji Paul (2019b) said this:

“The Minister of Territorial Administration wishes to inform the national and international community that after planning, sponsoring, and coordinating the massive destruction of Cameroonian Embassies in Paris and Berlin, the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) is still pursuing its provocative agenda and planning an uprising in Cameroon... This call by the CRM for Cameroonians to go to the streets on this date, confirms their determination to push through their agenda of destabilizing the republican institutions of the state”.

Not only is the MRC party accused of having a hidden agenda to destabilize the state, but it is also accused of masterminding the destruction of Cameroon embassies. The qualifiers used here paint the party as a dangerous and destructive force with nothing good to offer the state. The MRC leader had earlier condemned the destruction of the embassies and distanced the party. Besides, a Cameroonian diaspora group known as “Brigade Anti-Sardinard”, known for such attacks had claimed responsibility but this did not stop government from tagging the MRC with the act. Attributing this to the MRC would present the party as unpatriotic and reckless given that elections were near.

Furthermore, the Minister of Territorial Administration (Paul, 2020) still referred to a “hidden agenda” while informing the public of a planned MRC protest in 2020:

“I want to send a stern warning to unscrupulous politicians, looking for cheap popularity, with a hidden agenda aimed at disrupting the electoral process, that they will face the law”.

The use of the phrase “hidden agenda” removes the attention from the issues raised by the party in questions. The MRC had earlier announced that it will stage these protests if the electoral code was not reviewed before the legislative and municipal elections in 2020. According to the party, their protests were aimed at pressuring the government to consider the matter before the said elections (MRC, 2020). Framing it as an agenda to disrupt the election gives the government a chance to qualify it as a security problem and thus use force to suppress the protest and ignore the problem. The government’s focus in most of its communication was to discredit the protesters in any way possible by presenting them as a danger to the public.

Added to the use of certain words was the mix of appeal and threat in government language. In one of his numerous communications on security issues, the minister of communication Issa Tchiroma Bakary (2018a) said that *“The government of the republic calls on the national political class, opinion leaders from all leanings, the civil society as well as religious and traditional authorities to condemn in clear terms the secessionist ideology and the use of violence against innocent populations and the defense and security forces. They are further called on to take a firm stance against such acts”*.

In this statement, the first part sounds like an appeal and the second where he calls on the public to take a stance against the secessionists comes across as a threat. This sets a “fear agenda”. This statement raises the questions as to what will happen to those who do not condemn in “clear terms” or take “a firm stance against” the secessionists and their actions? The government has in many instances since 2014 been accused of arbitrary arrests and excessive use of force on civilians (International Crisis Group, 2020, Human Rights Watch, 2020). This threat thus aims at conditioning the public on where to side, not for their beliefs but for fear of what could happen to them.

Some of the institutions that accused government forces of committing atrocities include Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group. The government in its communication also set out to discredit these international non-governmental organizations (NGO). In one of his outings, the Minister of Communication accused these organizations of having an agenda to destabilize the country. Bakary (2018b) said that *“I cannot conclude my statement without strongly denouncing the relentlessness of “International Crisis Group”. This NGO has for several years now specialized in maneuvers to destabilize our country by means of manipulation and prophecies of doom”*.

By “relentlessness”, the minister referred to the group’s reports on government activities and that of soldiers. The government even owned up to some of the accusations but maintained that these organizations were out to undermine the “peace” in the country. Thus, by presenting these organizations as a negative force, the government could justify their expulsion as it did, hence limiting their checks on their activities. In another press conference, Rene Sadi (2020d) attacked Human Rights Watch and one of its staff, Illaria Allegrozzi:

“The Cameroonian government has in fact been in possession for the past few days of irrefutable evidence establishing links between, on the one hand, Mrs Illaria Allegrozzi, presented as a senior researcher at the NGO “Human Rights Watch”, author of the biased report incriminating the Cameroonian Armed Forces, and on the other hand, numerous secessionist terrorists who have regularly made available to her and at her request, since the beginning of the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions, photographs, videos, as well as information on their various abominations, so that they may be used as arguments against our Defence and security Forces”.

By “secessionist terrorists” here, the minister refers to the informants of Mrs. Illaria Allegrozzi who gave facts because a report from an investigative committee put in place by the head of state confirmed the facts presented by the NGO earlier. Nevertheless, government communication had discredited the organization and presented civilians as terrorist in the face of the public.

Furthermore, the government did not only end at accusing these NGOs and their staff but also accuse political parties of helping the agenda of these organizations. According to the Minister of Communication (Sadi, 2018c):

“Some information gathered from reliable sources reveal that some political actors associated with foreign interest have set up groups of agitators to plan violent unrest in case the results of the election are not in their favour. Allow me on behalf of the government to recall that the state’s sovereign mission in all circumstances and particularly during elections, is to maintain peace and guarantee free movement, to protect persons and their property throughout the national territory”.

The minister here refers to the MRC, suggesting that the party was sponsored by some foreign groups with an interest in the resources of the country. This is a strong agenda to set as the party is presented as that which is ready to auction the country if voted into government. While painting the others as a violent, disruptive and a sellout group, the government presents itself as the protector and the guarantor of peace. The minister’s reminder of government’s duty points to a justification of any action that follows. In other words, the pretext is already set. The description: “to plan violent unrest” immediately sets an atmosphere of fear as to what the future holds for the public. This therefore gives the government a reason to crackdown on the protesters even if their protests were peaceful, as the MRC said theirs would.

Additionally, most government communication avoided the grievances presented by the protesters and centered on the adverse outcomes of the protests. The insistence on the outcomes like the death of a soldier further amplifies the image of terrorists and shifts the focus from the real issues raised by the protesters. In another instance regarding the Anglophone crisis, the government dispatched delegations abroad to “explain” its own angle to the Cameroonian diaspora that seemingly was mobilized behind the Anglophone cause. “Explain” was the term used in the official communique, denoting that the government had its own agenda to spread which was focused on not solving the crisis but rather explaining its choice of force.

2. Praise for Head of State

Part of the objectives of this research is to shine light on the type of democracy practiced in Cameroon. Some authors like Morse (2017) and Hansen (2010) have described it as an electoral authoritarian regime. Others have even argued that it is not a democracy at all. However, the country’s constitution designates the country as a democracy. Nevertheless, in practice, power is mostly concentrated in the hands of the president. According to Morse (2017: 2), the survival of electoral authoritarian regime depends “on leveraging the state’s coercive capacities and the indomitable power of the presidency”. This statement describes the Biya regime, especially between 2014 and 2023. This can be seen through the constant praise for the head of state in the various government communications. The praise demonstrates the power that the president wields. Paul Biya is unlike most heads of states that engage with their citizens through frequent speeches addressing issues affecting the nation or through visits. He addresses the country twice a year; on the eve of the 11th of February that is Youth Day, and on the 31st of December in a New Year address. Besides, he is seldom seen in public except on occasions like the National Day celebrated every 20 May or once in seven years when he goes for a few campaign outings, or at special state ceremonies. This has made him omnipresent in his government and party’s communication. This theme features in all the documents selected from the ministries and other administrative sectors. In one document from the ministry of communication, the President is mentioned nine times in the short press briefing. This mention comes with attributes of a problem solver. The briefing in question was addressing the killing of 22 people by government forces in the North-West region including men, women, and children. The minister in an earlier

press conference had denied military involvement in the killings but an inquiry committee assigned by the President attributed it to the military. To address the new findings, the Minister of Communication (Sadi, 2020e) showered the President with all the praises possible:

“Furthermore, the most important thing is undoubtedly the decision of the President of the Republic to give credence to the findings of the independent inquiry that he ordered...Yes, we are saying that the most important thing is to hail, exalt and magnify the act of the PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, who is without doubt an example of political courage, that of the PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, faithful to his principles and commitments, concerned to build and preserve the image of a strong, responsible and exemplary Cameroonian Army”.

Here, the head of state is presented as the “Leviathan”. The only one capable of bringing the needed peace and progress. The rhetoric gives Biya a god-like image that plays in the way the public views him. Ultimately, government language and action are based on the president’s pronouncements. For instance, the Minister of Communication Issa Tchioroma banned discussions on federalism, and it was effective for a while until Biya in a speech mentioned that there was nothing wrong with federalism. This mention immediately became government rhetoric with the minister himself denying that he ever banned talks on the topic. They presented him as the benevolent leader, ready to accept taboo subjects. Nevertheless, Biya in 2016 had indirectly prohibited talks on federalism by dismissing any discussion on the form of state: *“We should remain open to constructive ideas, to the exclusion, however, of those that would affect the form of our State”.* However, his change of mind or the push to change of mind was presented by his collaborators and supporters as a victory for the country. This image distances him from any responsibility that could result or that resulted from not addressing the problem initially. This also ties in with Stohl’s (2008) claim that states distance themselves from the responsibility of their actions to avoid the response cost.

Furthermore, the release of the MRC leader and some Anglophone detainees was also presented an act of kindness from the President. In referring to this, Rene Sadi (2020f), the Minister of Communication, presented the President as such:

“Under the enlightened stewardship of His Excellency Paul Biya, Cameroon has always opted for democracy of inclusion and not that of exclusion. A few months

ago, His Excellency PAUL BIYA, in His legendary humanism and constitutional prerogatives, ordered the discontinuance of proceedings against an official of a political party and his accomplices, who had seriously violated the laws of the Republic”.

While Biya is presented as a humanitarian and enlightened leader, the MRC leader and his supporters are described as horrible people that defy the laws of the Republic. The above praises exclude the fact that Biya was pressured by both Cameroonians and the International Community for the release of these groups of persons. Nevertheless, he was presented as the hero.

In the 42 government documents studied, the president is mentioned 25 times in a manner of praise. For the most part, he is presented as the guarantor of democracy. The Minister of Territorial administration in one of the documents describe Biya as: *“Great Architect of peaceful democracy in Cameroon”*. In the documents, Biya is not only praised for no reason but is also praised for things that are simply his obligation as the head of state. The Minister of Territorial Administration in the same speech mentioned above thanked Biya for providing election resources to the bodies in-charge of elections (Paul, 2020a): *“The Minister of Territorial Administration would also like to sincerely thank the Head of State who provided all the needed means to all the election stakeholders to ensure a hitch-free election today”*.

Providing resources for elections is the duty of the head of state and not a gift as the minister insinuates. However, he is presented as a doer and a diligent president. In another communication, the Minister of Communication (Sadi, 2020g) described him thus:

“...furthermore, he has been working tirelessly to put in place a peaceful democracy and social climate conducive to the development of fruitful initiatives for nation building and progress in our country. Such is the case with the implementation of the decentralization process which has been completed with the holding of the 6 December 2020 regional elections that will enable our compatriots nationwide to fully participate in the management of their affairs at the local level”.

Attributes like “working tireless” gives the impression that the president is an active and swift responder to the needs and aspirations of the people. On the contrary, it

took him 24 years to call for the regional elections after it was inscribed in the constitution. Besides, his decision to put in place these regional structures was in a bid to solve the Anglophone crisis and not out of his will as the minister suggested. The Constitution had defined the country as a “decentralized” state since 1996, but this was never effective. The opposition, civil society and the International Community had pressured for the implementation of this clause for years to no avail. However, the call for regional elections by the president was crafted by government as an act of goodness to the people. The image of Leviathan was continuously portrayed as he was presented as the bringer of the peaceful solution to the conflict in the Anglophone regions.

The praise in other words was a soft campaign, presenting the CPDM candidate and party in the best possible way. Portraying Biya as the Leviathan meant voters will see him and his party as the choice for peace and security. Meanwhile, the government had rejected calls for an inclusive dialogue proposed by the opposition and the civil society to end the crisis. Rather, the government designed a dialogue that excluded separatists and other major Anglophone activists. Nevertheless, Biya was brandished by his collaborators as embodiment of peace. This constant praise for the head of state prompted a mockery song titled: “We thank the head of state” authored by a Cameroonian artist, Kobo. The lyrics recite some of the rhetoric reiterated by the government since 2016. This demonstrates how extensive and frequent this praise was in this period.

3. Military vs Terrorists

Like the head of state, the military also received lots of praise from government officials. In most of government communication since 2014, soldiers were presented as heroes of the nation and highly praised when the occasion presented itself. In 2015, the government launched a campaign to support the troops against Boko Haram and the country responded positively and massively. Many supported the initiative financially, vocally, and materially. However, the government did not get the same response in their crusade in the Anglophone regions. Unlike Boko Haram that was an invading force, many saw the Anglophone case as an internal problem that needed to be solved through dialogue. With this backlash, the government embarked on a vigorous praise for the military, with a constant reminder of their victory against Boko Haram. In one of the Minister of

Communication's press conferences, he regretted that the military did not get the same support as it did in the case of Boko Haram (Sadi, 2020h): *"The Army that is being mobbed today by some is the same Army whose prowess in fighting Boko Haram terrorist sect was celebrated yesterday"*.

In his view, any allegation against the military should be overlooked and they should be acclaimed. His choice of words to describe the military presents them as harmless and professional soldiers who are just doing their job and who are under false accusations (Sadi, 2020i):

"Beyond the ungrounded stigmatization and slander directed against our defense and security forces, we should underscore and magnify the remarkable virtues that characterize our army, an elite army that is strong, credible, professional and mature, and whose daily activities builds on the sacrosanct principles of respect for republican institution and the defense of the nation with honor and loyalty".

On the other hand, protesters or separatists are termed terrorists, automatically labelling them as enemies of the state. While he uses these flamboyant uplifting terms to describe the military, he (Sadi, 2020d) describes the separatists on the other hand as *"... systematically unrepentant and totally dehumanized armed gangs, assassins, looters, and rapists..."*.

According to Stohl (2008: 8), such a view brings the government to the conclusion that the obvious strategic decision is to eliminate them because they cannot be tamed or moderated. This contrasting view of the other against the government shows how the government valued the choice of force. In the above-mentioned communication, the government was accusing the media of siding with the separatists and presenting them as *"innocent angels, alleged victims of the tyranny of the government and our Defense and Security Forces"*. Sadi further accused the media of concealing separatists' deeds while the military which he describes as "legitimately" engaged in a fight to preserve territorial integrity and national security is constantly "being conspired, demonized and stigmatized." According to Stohl (2008), the use of "legitimate" as used here falls in line with the "raison d'état" that governments use to justify acute violence on the people. He adds that governments use this excuse to distance themselves from actions that they will otherwise consider lawless or unacceptable if carried out by others.

In many instances, the military was accused of human rights abuses, but the government fiercely defended them each time it came up. In the military's defense, government presented them as "disciplined republican soldiers" who are saving the nation from "terrorists". In one of Biya's speeches in 2020 (2020a) he said the following:

"I would also like to commend here the bravery of our Defence and Security Forces that have not failed in their duty to protect the integrity of the national territory, the people and property. They deserve the respect and consideration of everyone. I encourage them to keep it up and to remain a republican force that respects human rights".

The military in every country has the duty to protect the integrity of the territory, the people, and their property. However, in the case of Cameroon, the constant reminder of this duty seemingly points to an agenda to justify their presence in the field. Labelling the others as terrorist therefore explained what the military was chasing and thus the continuation of the conflict.

In defending the military, the government seemingly had no limits. In 2018, a video surfaced of soldiers shooting to death two women, a baby, and a child in the Far North Region of the country. Amnesty International accused the country's military of carrying out the act and supported the claims with satellite images and other facts. The minister of communication immediately said these images were taken from an incident in the Republic of Mali. He accused Amnesty International of trying to destabilize Cameroon with such allegations. It was later proven that this act was committed by Cameroonian soldiers, and the soldiers were arrested (Human Rights Watch, 2020a). Nevertheless, pointing fingers at other countries did not end here. In 2020 when the military invaded a village in the North-West Region called Ngarbuh and killed 22 people, the government also denied the act and accused International Organizations of using fake pictures to blame Cameroon. According to the Minister of Communication Rene Sadi (2020b):

"This can also be noticed in the publications published on 15 February 2020 on the Ngarbu incident where images taken in a West African country following a traffic accident were used to support the thesis of massacres allegedly perpetrated by the Cameroonian army in its fight against terrorist gangs in the North-West and South-West Regions".

Just like in the first case, further investigation proved that the Cameroonian military was responsible, and that the images were neither from Mali nor from another West African country. Moreover, the minister in the same sentence above lays emphasis on the idea that the army was fighting “terrorist gangs in the North-West and South-West Regions”. This emphasis used alongside denial in the same sentence paints the military as the victim. The term “terrorist” to a Cameroonian brings bad memories of Boko Haram activities in the country. Thus, by equating separatists or protesters to terrorist and laying emphasis on it in every communication, government aimed at reviving this image and emotion in the people, which could bring in sympathy for the military.

Furthermore, praise for the military did not only end at defending it but also used as a campaign strategy as seen in government communication. In one of the press conferences, Rene Sadi (2020b), the Minister of Communication, described the Cameroonian public as being in solidarity with the army and the President: *“Fortunately, the Cameroonian people, in its vast majority sees right through it. It is fully aware of the issues of the day and intends to remain vigilant and mobilized to thwart destabilizing maneuvers wherever they may come from, in solidarity with its Army and confident in the enlightened leadership of the PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, HIS EXCELLENCY PAUL BIYA”*.

Language like “enlightened leadership” insinuate that the minister is trying to convince the people to see the leadership of the president as enlightened and not actually stating the feeling of the people. As demonstrated under “praise for head of state” above, praising the head of state was an integral part of government communication in this period. This praise as could be imagined was aimed at gaining admiration for the president and eventually for his policies. Admiration for the president and his policies will very much translate to support for the military. Thus, the minister’s use of “vast majority” of the people being “in solidarity with its Army” can be understood as an assumption that came with the praise for the head of state and a message for the “few” left out to join in this solidarity. The question raised by this assertion is whether the government would have to defend the military in all these instances if the “vast majority” was in solidarity with it?

Going forward, in another instance, Biya (2018) in a Youth Day address to the youths used young soldiers to paint an image of patriotism: *“Allow me, once*

again, to underscore the heroism of our defence and security forces - mostly young people - whose sense of duty and responsibility has been beyond all praise”.

Describing soldiers as heroes in an address to the youth in a time of war and insecurity can be understood as a move to convince the youth to see themselves in those he is describing. The use of the phrase “mostly young people” in this context is an emotional appeal that can attract the sympathy of other young people he is addressing to show support for the forces. Support for the army will mean support for Biya’s policies. According to Sproat (2008), states often formulate and present their violent activities in a way that makes it difficult for scholars to distinguish between a state’s legitimate activities and activities that can be defined as terrorism. The address to youths apparently appeals to their sympathy and expectantly will take away their attention from the state’s violent activities in this instance.

Furthermore, while the government strongly defended and praised the military, it also did not spare any instance to condemn the others. From the documents studied, the government always took a while to address allegations of military abuses, and each time they did they were on the defensive. However, in the case of the separatists, MRC members or Anglophone protesters, government reaction was usually very swift and demonizing. It took the government four days to react to the Ngarbu massacre and the first reaction was to accuse Human Rights Watch of trying to destabilize the country. However, in the case of the Kumba massacre the government reacted the very day and blamed the separatists for the act though separatists also accused soldiers of the act. According to the Minister of Communication (Sadi, 2020e):

“The Government of Cameroon strongly condemns these heinous and unsustainable acts committed by secessionist gangs who, for absurd, illegitimate and unacceptable motives, continue to kill honest and innocent citizens all around”.

The government does not only accuse the separatists here but also water-down their cause as “absurd, illegitimate and unacceptable motives”. This has been the case since 2016 with all the security crises. Between 2016/2017, the government insisted that there was no Anglophone Problem until Biya recognized some aspects of the grievances. The government also dismissed all the MRC grievances as unfounded. However, in 2021 it recognized the MRC complaints about the electoral code after holding three major elections without the MRC. The government understood that

demeaning the grievances of the other took away the power of the complaint no matter how strong it was. As such, it applied this strategy frequently and to every major protest in this period. This strategy was often followed by accusing others of atrocities and tagging them as a threat, hence the use of force. More so, the government hardly delivered results from investigations it promised after accusing the other of being the author. In the case of the Kumba massacre for instance, no separatist group claimed responsibility, but all accused the military. The government promised to investigate the incident but up until 2023, the results were still to be known. This was the case for many others except for Ngarbuh and a few other cases that were released owing to national and international pressure.

In another instance, the Minister of Communication Issa Tchiroma (Bakary, 2018a) said that:

“The Minister of Communication wishes to inform the national and international community that terrorists claiming to be secessionists, have since September 1, 2018, perpetrated a series of criminal acts obviously aimed at destroying the smooth start of the 2018/2019 school year in certain localities of the North-West and South-West Regions”.

By terrorists claiming to be secessionists, he gives the impression that secession is an idea accepted by the government and that terrorists have hijacked this position. However, the same minister had banned talks on federalism suggesting that it was same as secession. In this regard, the government is seen to pick and choose the “better evil” and label the other as the worst. This framing was seemingly an attempt to present those who stood for the idea as terrorist separate from the concept of secession.

4. Government Above the Law

According to Newman (2010) states often claim the need to limit the liberties of citizens with the excuse of saving democracy especially in cases where people are protesting or rioting against the government. While the government of Cameroon was accusing others of violating the law, they were seen to be acting above the law. Between 2018 and 2022, most MRC protests were banned even before the competent authorities could issue a refusal letter as demanded by the law. Between 2017 and 2021, no opposition party was allowed to protest even when they had followed the

law (Freedom House, 2020). Meanwhile, the CPDM was allowed to stage anti-protest marches and carry out other activities that were restricted for other parties within this period. The key reason given for the refusal of authorization and bans on protests was usually the “national security”. In 2020, Rene Said (2020h), the Minister of Communication banned an MRC planned protest just by “judging” the comments of the party leader:

“... it is definitely necessary to clarify national and international opinion on the fact that the march planned by Mr. Maurice Kamto and his accomplices on the 22 of September 2020 was in no way a “peaceful march” when judging by the statement made on August 24, 2020, by Mr. Kamto in his capacity as president of the political party called “Cameroon Renaissance Movement” the CRM...”

The statement referred to and quoted rather suggests selective reading and the minister’s angle of interpretation. In another press conference, the Minister (Sadi, 2020g) quoted the MRC leader thus:

“I am announcing that any convening of the electoral college by the illegal and illegitimate government of Yaoundé, before the taking into account and effective implementation of the two requirements recalled above, will AUTOMATICALLY lead to a launch of a gigantic national campaign “TO CALL FOR THE OUTRIGHT DEPARTURE OF Mr. PAUL BIYA FROM POWER, without there being any need to wait for a new communication in this regard””.

This communication ignored the first part of the statement that stated the party’s grievances and focused on the outcome promised by the speaker. The requirements “recalled above” mentioned in the statement were the review of the electoral code and an end to the Anglophone crisis, according to a communique from the MRC (MRC 2020). First, the minister banning the protests was in violation of law No 90/055 of December 1990, which gives this competence to the local authority. According to the minister, the protests were unauthorized because of their “insurrectionary nature”. Going by the law above, this statement could have been published by the local authority, which could have given the party a chance to challenge it in court within eight days. However, this was not the case according to the MRC.

Moreover, in 2019, the Minister of Territorial Administration (Paul, 2019b) instructed local authorities to ensure that MRC protests did not take place all over the country:

“The Minister of Territorial Administration wishes to emphasize that all public manifestations organized by the CRM party from the 6 and 13 of April 2019, have been prohibited all over the national territory. Administrative authorities precisely: Regional Governors, Senior Divisional Officers and Divisional Officers shall each in their sphere of influence ensure the strict implementation of these directives”.

These directives seem to have been implemented indefinitely as the party did not get any authorization to protest within this period. This indicates that the government bypassed the law with the excuse of national security. Secondly, as denoted by the minister himself in the press conference, protests are a fundamental human right. Paul Atanga Nji (Paul, 2019a) made a similar statement regarding political parties in 2019:

“The laws of the Republic allow legally registered political parties to freely exercise their activities, but in strict compliance with the regulations in force”.

This in other words means that the party, like any other, had the right to demand authorization from the local authority and freely protest. However, the government was in the habit of banning protests, thus making it difficult for other political parties to carry out their activities. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines protest as “a strong complaint expressing disagreement, disapproval, or opposition. This is done through writing, verbal expressions or street marches”. It is thus possible that the strong disapproval or complaint may be against government interest and the government may be tempted to use the law to its advantage. This seems to have been the case in this period as seen from government communication. In banning the protests, as seen above, the government often left out the major issues raised by the political party or other groups and capitalized on a few phrases, thus suppressing the voices of those who disagreed. Hence, this was framed as a security reason and hence the use of force.

In another instance, while protests and celebrations were banned in Anglophone regions on October 1st, 2017, parliamentarians (mostly of the CPDM)

and other government officials gathered in Yaoundé for the same purpose. The 1st of October is the day British Southern Cameroon officially became free from British rule and free to join the Republic of Cameroon. In 2017, Anglophone activists and separatists called for mass protests across the two Anglophone regions to denounce marginalization and to “restore” their “independence”. The government declared these protests illegal and heavily militarized the region. According to the news agency Reuters (2017), *“Authorities had banned all gatherings of more than four people, ordered bus stations, eateries, and shops to shut and forbade movement between different parts of the English-speaking regions ahead of the protests. The government also ordered Cameroon’s border with Nigeria closed for the weekend”*.

While commemorations were banned for others on this day, members of parliament were marching in Yaoundé to celebrate the unity of the country. This was the first time the day was celebrated by a government structure, especially in the Francophone part of the country. Its aim was ostensibly to counter the protests in the Anglophone regions and not necessarily to commemorate the day. The CPDM staged a number of such counter protests between 2017 and 2023. While the celebrations in Yaoundé were peaceful and guided by security forces, Reuters (2017) reported that eight people were killed in the NW and SW regions on that day by the military.

Another instance of the government acting above the law was a CPDM meeting held in Bamenda in December 2016. This meeting was in complete defiance of the security threat it posed. After the party held a similar meeting in Buea (another major Anglophone town) earlier that month and announced one for Bamenda, Anglophone activists and sympathizers warned that the meeting will be disrupted if held. This was a serious security threat, but the party insisted on holding the meeting. On December 8th, 2016, protesters stormed the streets and targeted the party hall resulting in the suspension of the meeting and the evacuation of government ministers including the Prime Minister. At least four people were killed according to Reuters (2016). Several others were wounded, property was destroyed, and many were arrested. This meeting was aimed at showing “Anglophone” solidarity with the party leader Paul Biya, amidst Anglophone claims of marginalization. Going by government’s logic in banning other meetings, this meeting could have been a good case of “threat to national security” but government rather demonstrated that security was only an issue when its interest or that of the CPDM was at risk. By endangering

the lives of many to hold this meeting, this thesis argues here that the government acted above its own logic and thus above its own law confirming Sproat's (2008) assertion that states put their interests first and cover up with security.

Furthermore, after months of protests and boycotts in the Anglophone regions in demand for the release of Anglophone detainees in Yaoundé, Biya, on August 30th, 2017, released some of them and dropped the charges against them (Amnesty International, 2017b). Those released were described by the government as those with minor crimes. Nevertheless, these individuals were charged with terrorism and judged in military courts. The law on terrorism has a maximum penalty of death, and allows authorities to detain indefinitely those accused of terrorism. It also provides for prosecution in military courts though it breaches Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This article guarantees individuals a fair, independent, and public hearing of any criminal charges against them. The law also contravenes the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which Cameroon ratified in 1989. According to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights:

“The only purpose of Military Courts shall be to determine offences of a purely military nature committed by military personnel” (G:a)

“Military courts should not in any circumstances whatsoever have jurisdiction over civilians. Similarly, Special Tribunals should not try offences which fall within the jurisdiction of regular courts.” (G:c).

This, however, was not the case as those arrested in the context of the Anglophone crisis or MRC protests were judged in military courts.

5. Praise for Country's Democracy

The constitution of Cameroon describes the country as a democratic and decentralized state. According to article 1 (2), “The Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary State. It shall be one and indivisible, secular, democratic and dedicated to social service. It shall recognize and protect traditional values that conform to democratic principles, human rights, and the law. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law” (Constitution of Cameroon). In this regard, the country holds presidential elections every seven years, and senatorial, legislative, municipal, and regional elections every five years. All these elections were held in the country between 2018 and 2023. In this period, one of the key approaches used in

government communication was to present democracy in the country as incredibly active and effective. This theme appeared in almost all the government documents studied. At every given opportunity, the government praised the strides made in democracy and presented the country as an ideal democracy. As such, they trivialized every grievance that emanated from the none or partial application of democratic rules thus justifying the choice of force. In one of his speeches in 2020, Biya (2020a) stated that “*Democracy is effective in Cameroon and is advancing in giant strides*”. Insisting on the effectiveness of democracy in the country raises questions as to its effectiveness. Since the 1990’s, there has been many criticisms of the practice of democracy in the country, especially from the opposition (Takougang 2003, Fonchingong 1998). The MRC protests were centered on a balanced platform for all parties in elections. Amongst other things, for years, the party has been asking for the following (MRC, 2016):

1. *Introduction of the single ballot;*
2. *Election records with counterfoil, all original and authentic, thus binding on all parties in the event of dispute;*
3. *Two round electoral system for the presidency;*
4. *Limiting presidential terms to two;*
5. *Conditions for a strict application of Article 96 (4) which prohibits the opening of polling stations in places closed to the public;*
6. *Physical tour of polling stations by stakeholders before Election Day;*
7. *Conditions for a strict compliance with Article 97 which requires the voters' lists to be posted at least eight (08) days before the election date;*
8. *Ban on the distribution of voters' cards on Election Day; consensual electoral boundaries that take into account the demographic weight and equality of electoral areas;*
9. *Establishment of the voting age to 18; (20 as of now)*
10. *Conditions for bailiff's reports on Election Day without requiring the order of a judge;*
11. *Equal access of political parties and qualified candidates to public media*

during the election campaign.

12. *A new composition of ELECAM so that it stops being a section of the CPDM.*

These points seem like basic things that would exist in an “effective democracy”, but the MRC and other political parties had been demanding for years to no avail. Even the country’s election body Elecam in its 2019 report stated that the electoral code needed some adjustments (Elecam 2019). However, in turn, the government took on the defensive and rather insisted on the strength of democracy in the country. Biya (2020a), in his 2020 nation address, boasted of how fast the country has ascended the democracy ladder compared to advanced democracies:

“To those who are criticizing the imperfections of our democracy, I would like to say that it took us just a few decades to put it in place. The major democratic countries, for their part, did so only after several centuries marked by revolutions, civil wars and even episodes of dictatorship”.

In other words, Biya’s government understood and knew exactly how to make democracy effective in the country but chose to talk more about it than action. Hence, those who raised it and tried to protest were defined as a threat to national security, giving the government leverage to suppress their voices. Besides, his mention of revolutions and war gives the impression that he validated the security status in the country as a democratic process. Moreover, his party marched against democratization in the early 1990s when others pushed for changes. The party seems not to have fully embraced this process and had no intention of doing so as seen from the President’s reaction.

Furthermore, Biya had claimed in 2014 that the country’s democratic institutions were “fully functional” even though there were no regional councils as assigned by the 1996 constitution. This shows that he was clearly contented with the country’s democracy at the time although he did not perform his duty of putting in place the democratic institutions as tasked by the constitution. According to him (Biya, 2014):

“As I said at the onset, we were obliged to prioritize the defence of the national territory, for, there can be no peace without security and no development without peace. Nonetheless, we have not relented in our efforts to revive growth. Now that our democratic institutions are fully functional, growth is the focus of our policy”.

Even though the putting in place of the regional councils in 2020 was forced by the Anglophone crisis, his party ensured that they gained control of 9 out of the 10 regional bureaus. The government’s reluctance to put in place the regional assemblies continued even with the crushing majority. This could be seen in the distribution of power. The opposition had asked for independent regional assemblies with an elected governor, but the government maintained immense control in the hands of appointed governors and Divisional Officers (MRC, 2020). This puts appointed persons over elected representatives. In other words, the power that was meant to be decentralized remained with the central government suggesting that the regional elections were just a show of “democratic advancement” rather than the implementation of governance by the people. Besides, the government and the CPDM used the announcement of the regional elections to demonstrate that the President was advancing democracy in the country. This praise ignored the fact that he had violated the constitution for 24 years by not putting the structures in place. In all, while the government chose to use words to emphasize the progress of democracy, the practice showed different results.

Moreover, as the government celebrated democratic “advancement” in their speeches, they blamed others for not respecting democratic rules. In 2019 when the MRC protested the presidential election results, Biya (2019a) in a speech pointed out that they were against democratic rules:

“Unfortunately, a minority, in Cameroon and abroad, seem to have forgotten the rules that govern life in a democracy. Needless to recall that the sole arbiter in a democracy is the sovereign people. When the sovereign people make a choice through free and fair elections and the results are proclaimed after review of petitions, such results must be recognized and accepted by all”.

Noteworthy here is the fact that the government was very careful in the choice of words in their communication throughout this period. In the above quote, Biya presented the country’s democracy as a working democracy with rules. This suggests

that he and his government on the other hand had been respecting these rules. However, the practice showed a different result. First, the formation of Elecam and the Constitutional Council that are charged with elections failed to provide a balance playground for all parties. Most of the members of these two institutions prior to their appointment were supporters or members of the central bureau of the CPDM party. They were said to have resigned from the party a few days before their appointments (Freedom House, 2020). Since then, other political parties have been demanding a new board in Elecam without success. Secondly, Biya evokes the “sovereign people” suggesting that the people have the power to decide and did so in the elections. He ignored the fact that the elections were heavily contested both in court and in the streets by those who claimed victory or accused the CPDM of fraud. The many petitions tabled by the opposition were dismissed by the Constitutional Council raising questions as to the sovereignty of the people in the elections. Thirdly, he describes the elections as “free and fair” contrasting reports from the two Anglophone Regions. The election results showed that thousands were denied a chance to vote due to the absence of a ceasefire. The people did not have the freedom to vote nor had the fairness to serenity as was the case in other regions.

6. Reluctance to Address Major Concerns

The Anglophone crisis demonstrates how the Biya government turned simple issues into perceived threats. The crisis started as a teachers and lawyers’ strike but ended up in an armed conflict that caused thousands of deaths. The government’s response at the start was to suppress the protests with force. Lawyers and students were brutalized in the SW town of Buea and some were arrested (Amnesty International, 2016). This led to more protest and finally to an armed conflict. Government dismissed teachers’ and lawyers’ complaints and insisted on forging ahead with the “harmonization” plan which was aimed at merging the education and judicial systems of the French and English extractions practiced in the country. According to the lawyers and teachers, the harmonization plan was detrimental to Anglophones as Civil-Law French-speaking judges were appointed to Common-Law English-speaking courts and French-speaking teachers were sent to teach Anglophone kids that understood zero French (Gaston, 2023). Typically, the government ignored these grievances and only granted some of the demands when pressure was high. At this point, the protests had moved from a sectoral problem to a

general Anglophone protest. The government offered to recruit bilingual teachers, create a common law section in the school of magistracy and offer subventions to private schools amongst other things (Ekinneh, 2017). These grants went unnoticed because the demand had moved to federalism. Most of these offers however did not address the problems posed by the teachers and lawyers because the French-speaking teachers and judges were maintained. This prolonged the protests until separatists picked up arms, thus creating a real security threat.

Furthermore, the government only provided “solutions” after it had made political gains. For instance, Biya only called for a national dialogue to discuss the Anglophone problem after his victory in the presidential elections in 2018. Opposition parties, Civil Society and the International Community had clamored for dialogue since the beginning of the crisis in 2016 but Biya ignored the calls. According to him (Biya 2019b):

“I have decided to convene, from the end of this month, a major national dialogue to allow us... to examine the ways and means to respond to the deeply-held aspirations of the populations in the Northwest and Southwest, but also in all the other component parts of our great nation”.

The dialogue unfortunately did not address the “deeply held aspirations” of the people as the conflict continued. In 2017, Anglophones marched massively to show support for the Consortium’s demand for a return to federalism. However, in the National Dialogue, the government excluded federalism from the agenda offering decentralization that was already provided by the constitution since 1996 but was never implemented. Besides, separatists were not invited to the dialogue and fighting continued while the dialogue was ongoing. Discussion topics were designed by the government and only included issues it was comfortable with (Lekunze and Page, 2022). This shows that the government did not intend to end the crisis. Moreover, some of the solutions provided to the crisis were simply inscribed in the constitution. For instance, the creation of a Bilingual Commission that Biya and ministers referred to in most of their communications. This commission is supposed to ensure the equality of the two national languages – French and English. To this, article 1 (1) of the constitution states that the two languages are equal, indicating that his government had not been respecting the constitution for over 40 years. More so, the regional elections were also presented as a solution to the crisis. This as well was

inscribed in the constitution since 1996 but was never implemented.

In another instance, the government celebrated the release of Anglophone detainees as a solution to the crisis. National and International actors had demanded for the release of these individuals since their arrest in January 2017, but the government dismissed the calls. One of the reasons of the October 1st, 2017, protests in the Anglophone regions was to demand for the release of these persons (Freedom House, 2018). Rather, the government made more arrests, prolonging the crisis. In addition, the main group of people that could end the conflict were not released or invited to the national dialogue (Freedom House, 2020). This group included the leader of the secessionist wing and some who stood for federalism. Similarly, the government opposed an “All Anglophone Conference” initiated by Cardinal Christian Tumi and other religious leaders (International Crisis Group, 2023a). The conference was aimed at bringing Anglophones from the two regions together to constitute an Anglophone delegation to negotiate an end to the crisis. The government immediately termed the union as a separatist movement and the event was never held. This meeting was similar to the All-Anglophone Conference (AAC1 and 2) held in Buea and Bamenda respectively in 1993 and 1994 to discuss Anglophone marginalization and forward proposals to the government. These conferences ended in a demand for federation that was ignored by the same government in the review of the 1996 constitution (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

Furthermore, the Biya regime never accepted a grievance until the problem became a security concern. When Anglophones complained of marginalization in 2016, ministers, and other members of the CPDM; mostly Anglophones insisted that there was no marginalization at all. They dismissed the grievances of the lawyers and teachers as unfounded and non-existent. Biya only acknowledged marginalization when separatists picked up arms. Besides, the government always painted a picture of tranquility to the external world, suggesting that the country was peaceful even though deaths were registered on a daily basis in the Anglophone regions. The Minister of External Relations (Lejeune, 2019) in one of his outings in 2019 said:

“Cameroon is well governed. Peace is the order of the day. Each and every one is actually going about freely... In short, Cameroon is up and kicking, and is fully complying with its commitments vis-à-vis its people and the international community”.

This denial approach confirms Stohl's (2008) claim that governments usually avoid the response cost that may come in form of backlash from foreign powers or the international community. Lejeune's statement above suggests that there was serenity in the country at the time though over 3000 deaths had been reported in the Anglophone crisis. He was addressing foreign diplomats to Cameroon amidst a growing international interest in the Anglophone issue and the post-electoral crisis. After dismissing the MRC grievances for years as baseless, the government in 2021 acknowledged that the electoral code had issues and needed to be reviewed (Biya, 2021). It can then be argued here that the Biya regime did not want an end to the various crises in order to make political gains in the different elections, and thus prolonged or ignored solutions, thus creating an actual threat.

Furthermore, on September 13th, 2022, the government discontinued a Swiss mediation in the Anglophone crisis that started in 2019 and opted to continue with the military option (Sahli and Lattimer, 2022). It informed the Swiss government that it needed no mediator and would continue to implement the recommendations of the national dialogue it organized in 2019. Later in January 2023, the Canadian minister of foreign affairs, Mélanie Joly announced that both the government of Cameroon and separatist leaders had agreed to start peace negotiations. This announcement was widely reported by domestic and foreign press but three days later, the minister of communication Rene Sadi (2023) gave a contradictory response:

“Following recent information disseminated by certain media, the Government of the Republic of Cameroon informs national and international community that it has not entrusted any foreign country or external entity with any role of mediator or facilitator to settle the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions. It recalls that it is first and foremost up to the Cameroonian people, to the institutions and leaders that they have freely chosen, to seek appropriate ways and means to address problems facing our country”.

The Canadian mediation came after the death toll in the conflict had doubled to 6000 people according to The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (2022). According to International Crisis Group (2023), Canada had held pre-talks with both parties for several months before the announcement. Still, the government backed out and insisted on the military option. Prior to the Canadian announcement, there have been fresh calls for a new and inclusive dialogue to end the conflict, but the

government insisted that the 2019 national dialogue had provided solutions.

Table 3: Issues with government solutions

Government solutions	Problem
Decentralization	Granted by the 1996 Constitution (Delayed implementation led to the Anglophone crisis)
Special Status to the NW and SW	Constitutional provision: section 62 (2). Also, competences granted alongside end at proposals.
Bilingualism and Multicultural Commission	Article 1 (3) demand equality of both official languages (The commission has no execution powers and can only recommend to government) Rejection of ceasefire. Insistence on surrender and continuation of the military approach
Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Centers for ex fighters	
Reconstruction of affected areas in the NW and SW	Insisting on reconstruction while the destruction is still ongoing

Most of the solutions avoided the problem completely. The Anglophone demands for instance were about the form of state but the National Dialogue that aimed to address the issues barred any topic on the form of state (Biya, 2016).

7. The Unity Narrative

Since 2016, national unity became a major theme in Biya’s communication, likewise his collaborators. When the Anglophone teachers and lawyers’ strike morphed into an Anglophone movement, the government immediately interpreted it as a move for secession. In this regard, the claim to national unity became a major rhetoric of the government and members of the CPDM party. Not only did they start calling for national unity, but also, they insisted that the country was one and indivisible. From then on, phrases like “national unity”, “living together”, “territorial integrity”, “one and indivisible” became very popular in their discourses. In one of his speeches for example, Biya (2016) said this:

“We are willing to move in the footsteps and spirit of the architects of Reunification and put in place a national entity which will be tasked with proposing

solutions aimed at maintaining peace, consolidating our country's unity and strengthening our resolve and our day-to-day experiences of LIVING TOGETHER”.

Saying “we are willing” leaves the impression that the will was not there prior to 2016. This only gives reason to the Anglophone grievances that the government dismissed at the time. Despite the denial, the government was very conscious of the idea of unity and made sure that it was heard. This points to the prevention of the internal response cost as indicated by Stohl (2008). In the above sentence alone, Biya uses four words and phrases that denote unity: reunification, national entity, country's unity and living together. Besides, the mention of the footsteps and spirit of the “architects of reunification” targeted the protesting Anglophones who accused the government of diverting the vision of these founders. This mention can be seen as a form of assurance that the government has been in line with this vision. These “architects of reunification” agreed on a federal structure that Anglophones in 2016 were demanding.

Furthermore, despite the Anglophone complaint of marginalization and an active armed conflict, the government presented the idea of unity as the people's project. This narrative was not only directed to Anglophones for obvious reasons, but also referred to the MRC protesters who had showed no interest in separating the country. The Minister of Communication (Sadi, 2018b) in one of his press conferences said:

“THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, HIS EXCELLENCY PAUL BIYA hails the commitment of the Cameroonian people that is ever dedicated to promoting a united, democratic and prosperous Cameroon, where the values of tolerance and living together prevail”.

This narrative points to three possible effects. 1) To discourage other Anglophone Cameroonians from aligning with the separatists, and others from copying the idea of secession. 2) To distinguish separatist from Cameroonians, and 3) to force government's idea of unity on the people. Point (2) suggests that those who oppose government's idea of a united Cameroon as mentioned in point (3) will immediately be considered separatists and dealt with as such. This could be done either by coercing them or by using the law on terrorism on them or both. By government's idea of unity, the thesis refers to (i) government's interpretation of federalism as secession and (ii) government's position on MRC protests. The Anglophone

Consortium members were charged with secession even though their demand was for a return to federalism. Thus, federalism to the government suggested that the country would be divided (Biya, 2016): *“Cameroon’s unity is therefore a precious legacy with which no one should take liberties. Any claim, no matter how relevant, loses its legitimacy once it jeopardizes, even slightly, the building of national unity”*.

In his view, the building of national unity remains the government’s design and the citizens have no choice than to accompany this idea notwithstanding their views and feelings. This falls back to Lijphart’s questions on the meaning of “the people” in a democracy. Who are the sovereign people in this case and whom is the government ruling for? If the people rule, then should the government impose a view on them? According to Lijphart (2011), the most basic definition of democracy is not only government *by* the people but also *for* the people, “that is, in accordance with the people’s preferences and serving their interests”.

Moreover, the government’s continuous mention of unity in addressing the MRC protests signaled that unity meant allying with the government’s position even if the MRC had valid reasons. This can be seen from the threats issued to the party protesters and anyone joining them. Furthermore, this narrative in most cases was dictated and not only used as a persuading tool (Biya, 2016):

“A country that is ONE and INDIVISIBLE, proud of its cultural diversity and jealous of its freedom...

Do I need to repeat this? CAMEROON IS ONE AND INDIVISIBLE! It shall so remain... ”.

This statement was at the mention of federalism. Thus, freedom of expression was not negotiable. To buttress this, while calling for a national dialogue, Biya insisted that all topics were welcomed except that on the form of state. In his defense, the government argued that talking on the form of state was risking the unity of the country. They alluded to article 1(2) of the constitution that says the country is one and indivisible. To the government, the constitution cannot be changed. Nevertheless, the same government changed the constitution in 2008 to prolong Biya’s stay in power after his term limit expired. The modification removed the limitation to the president’s mandate. This suggests that the government’s refusal to discuss the form of state was because its interest was not represented,

notwithstanding that the Anglophone grievances were based on the form of state.

8. Security of the People

Closely linked to the theme of unity narrative is the theme of “security of the people”. This theme is largely used as a justification for the choice of force. According to Stohl (1984), states often use the “raison d’état” (reason of state) to justify the use of force. One of the common justifications advanced is usually the security and interest of the people. According to him, *raison d’état* is a dubious concept that states use to limit citizens’ liberties and suppress them with coercive force. Recurrent in the communiqués and speeches studied is the idea of securing the people and their property. This theme is often accompanied by the defense of military actions and a lecture on unity and territorial integrity. According to Rene Sadi, the Minister of Communication (2020b): *“With regard to our defence and security forces, which clearly constitute the main target of the slayers of our Nation, we must ask ourselves what are the underlying reasons for the persecution to which they are subjected, even though they are engaged in a mission that is both civic and republican, to preserve territorial integrity and to secure the population and their property”*.

Prior to the change in language, the rhetoric was more about maintaining law and order. The shift came with the evolution of the Anglophone crisis and the persistent protests from the MRC. When some Anglophones picked up arms, the government immediately crafted the language into “the people” against “terrorists”, hence, security of the people and their property became the subject. Through this, government emphasized on eradicating the “enemy” and insisted that terrorists had no place in dialogue, thus pushing for more force. Addressing heads of diplomatic missions in 2019, the Minister of External Relations (Lejeune, 2019) said:

“... the Cameroonian army is on the ground to protect the people and their property against secessionist terrorists and carry out its republican mission of safeguarding the territorial integrity of our country”.

This address came after international pressure on the country for the release of the MRC leader and the resolution of the Anglophone crisis. This statement was a response to the various allegations against the military and the minister ensured to reinforce the narrative of securing the people and their property, thus justifying their

actions in the field. While the minister insisted on securing the people and their property, a Human Rights Watch report accompanied by satellite images and social media videos showed soldiers burning houses sometimes with their occupants inside and destroying properties in various areas of the Anglophone regions (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Moreso, the narrative on securing the people was not only to defend the military or justify government's choice of war but it was also used as a persuasive tool. Besides the military, separatists were also accused of committing atrocities in the NW/SW by national and international NGOs. Human Rights Watch accused them of killings, kidnappings, torture, and destruction of property amongst other things (Human Rights Watch, 2022a). Separatists themselves shared videos of brutal killings on social media, of those they labelled as "black legs". They also issued audios, videos, and written threats to those that disregard their orders. Thus, repeatedly mentioning "the security of people and their property" in government's communication could convince many to side with the government for their interest. However, while the government was insisting on the security of the people, allegations of military brutalities were also reported. This raises the question as to the sincerity of the government's talk on protection. For instance, in 2017, the military was accused of burning down entire villages and killing dozens of people in the process. This action led to mass exodus from these villages with some crossing into neighboring countries like Nigeria as refugees (Amnesty International, 2017a). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021), there were over 65,000 Cameroonian refugees in the Nigerian states that share borders with Anglophone Cameroon. Apparently, a good majority of these migrants were Anglophones.

Furthermore, in many of the killings or destruction in the NW/SW, both government and separatists traded accusations, leaving the public confounded. However, the government in most cases promised to investigate the crimes but most of the reports were never made known to the people. In the case of a three-month-old killed in Muyuka, a town in the South-West Region, nothing was ever said about the promised report after government and separatists exchanged accusations. More so, six government Divisional Delegates were kidnapped by separatists in the Ndian Division of the SW region in 2021, but the government stayed mute until 2023 when

a separatist fighter who joined the government’s Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration center (DDR) informed the government of their demise more than two years earlier (Jade, 2023). This case added to the kidnap of the Divisional Officer for Batibo in the NW region in 2018 which government also maintained silence. Failing to publish these findings raises questions on government’s emphasis on the people’s security. The two results that were published implicated the military, suggesting that the others may not have been published for similar reasons. The two include the Ngarbu massacre and the killing of women and children in the Far North Region of the country. Government’s silence on the kidnap and death of its own officials questions the narrative on securing the people. More so, the reports and satellite images showing government’s actions against the people adds to the doubt, leading to Stohl’s (1984) conclusion that the *raison d’état* only justifies the cause and not the course, and the course could be executed with the “intention” of instilling fear in the people.

Table 4: Variables and corresponding themes

Independent Variable	Dependable Variables	Moderating Variable	Mediating Variable
National Security (Hammer and lies)	Democracy and Governance (electoral, constitutional, majoritarian)	Security Threat (Armed Conflict/Crisis)	Elections
-Praise for military Government above the Law	-Praise for Head of State	-Security of the people	-Praise for Head of State
-Reluctance to Address Major Concerns	-Praise for Democracy	-Agenda Setting	-Praise for Democracy
-Agenda setting	-Government above the law	-Reluctance to Address Major Concerns	-Reluctance to Address Major Concerns
-Unity narrative	-Reluctance to Address Major Concerns	-Military vs terrorists	-Agenda setting
-Security of the people			
Denying military violence as in the Ngarbuh and Far North killings	Contradicting the rules of democracy by concentrating power and praise in an individual	-Setting a premise for a perceived security threat by magnifying issues, e.g equating federalism to secession	-Campaigning in advance by presenting the “qualities” of one candidate
Denying the existence of the Anglophone Problem but addressing it with military force.	-Using security to bypass laws in terms of civil liberties and rights	-Delayed solutions creating an actual threat	-Setting grounds to discourage other political parties, e.g the MRC and SDF boycott of major elections
Downplaying grievance but making them a security problem.	-Holding back good governance in terms of working solutions to make political gains.	-Demonizing the other to justify military force	-Delaying working solutions to gain votes in conflict zones
Insistence on <i>raison d’état</i> .			

C. Effects of National Security Approach on Democracy and Governance in Cameroon Between 2014 and 2023

This section establishes the link between the various variables and answers the main research questions: How does national security measures affect democracy and governance in Cameroon?

The conceptual framework adopted some democracy indicators that featured in most of the indexes examined. These include political pluralism and participation, civil liberties, rule of law, electoral process, and government functioning. The indicators are provided by the constitution of Cameroon and gives the basis of judging Cameroon as a democracy.

Table 5: Democracy indicators

Vanhanen	Political participation and competitiveness
Jagers and Gurr	Regulation of political participation Competitiveness of political participation Constraints on the executives Regulation of executive recruitment Competitiveness of the executive recruitment Openness of executive recruitment Centralization of state authority Monocratism Government functioning
Freedom House	Political Pluralism and participation Civil liberties Rule of law Electoral process Government functioning
Economist Intelligence Unit	Electoral process and pluralism Functioning of government Political participation Political culture Civil liberties.

As indicated in the conceptual framework, most of the democracy indexes measure governance alongside democracy because the implementation of democracy signals good governance. Thus, this section will examine the effects of national security approach – the independent variable that has been conceptualized as the “Hammer and lies” approach on the dependent variables - democracy and governance - simultaneously. According to ELff and Ziaja (2018), determining the

best sources available for the measure of democracy always depends on the research question at hand. Freedom House is one of the widely accepted indexes and measures both democracy and governance. Thus, some of the institution's research questions will be used in this section to examine the effects of national security on democracy and governance. This is to remain within the confines of the definition of these indicators. The conceptual framework also identified two threats: the actual threat and the perceived threat – the moderating variable, which both influenced the national security approach. The mediating variable–election plays a vital role in this section as it forms the basis of measurement.

1. Impacts on Political Participation and Competitiveness

These indicators measure public participation in politics, especially elections and how competitive the elections were for the selection of representatives. Most of the indexes consider these variables and Freedom House poses the following questions to measure this category: Did voters have equal access to polling places and opportunities to cast ballots? Is there a significant opposition vote? Are there genuine opposition forces in positions of authority, such as in the national legislature or in subnational governments?

Cameroon held all its major elections between 2018 and 2023 and the CPDM emerged victorious in all. The low turnout in the 2018 Presidential elections and subsequent elections in the troubled NW and SW raised the question of legitimacy of the elected representatives. In several cases, the participation rate was less than 1% of the registered voters and the average turnout was about 5% (Elections Cameroon, 2018). The opposition had clamored for a ceasefire in the Anglophone regions to allow free participation, but the government turned it down, opting for the military approach (Freedom House, 2018). Consequently, those who could access the polling stations were those with military protection and this happened to be members of the CPDM for the most part (Freedom House, 2018). Separatists had announced a boycott of the various elections and threatened voters with death. Thus, the election did not allow equal access and opportunity to everyone. In the 2018 Presidential election for instance, turnout was so low that some Divisions recorded less than 1% of the total number of registered voters (Elections Cameroon, 2018). Divisions are the next administrative units after regions that follow the central administration. In Meme Division in the SW Region for instance, only 3,190 votes were casted out of

89,284 voters registered (Elections Cameroon 2018). Boyo Division in the NW Region recorded only 363 votes out of 57,945 registered voters, scoring 0.63% in the election. Out of these votes, the CPDM received 70.52%. In addition, Menchum Division, still in the NW Region recorded a 1.47% turnout with just 765 votes out of 52,095 registered voters for the entire Division (Elections Cameroon, 2018). These low figures were recorded across the two regions with the most votes registered in Fako Division of the SW Region, showing 22,800 votes out of 143,743 registered voters with a 15.86% turnout rate (Elections Cameroon, 2018). Even as low as these figures were, the opposition argued that the numbers were less than what ElecCam presented because opposition observers were not present in many of the polling stations and only CPDM observers signed the final lists in many polling stations (Enonchong, 2020). The tables below show the various Divisional election results in the 2018 presidential election in the NW and SW. The tables also show the 2011 presidential election results in these regions to illustrate the difference in participation rates and buttress the effects of the national security approach on democracy and governance.

Table 6: 2018 presidential election results in the North-West region

Division	Registered voters	Number of voters	Participation rate %	CPDM	SDF
Boyo	57,945	363	0.63%	70.52%	12.12%
Bui	107,461	6,208	5.78%	81.01%	12.95%
Donga-Mantung	107,615	10,879	10.11%	87.64	7.65%
Menchum	52,095	765	1.47%	63.56%	32.11%
Mezam	194,919	9,744	5.00%	75.99%	11.14%
Momo	52,146	4,287	8.22%	88.94%	4.68%
Ngo-Ketunjia	54,887	1,336	2.43%	69.21%	21.05%

Source: Elections Cameroon NW Region, 07 October 2018 Presidential Elections

Table 7: 2011 presidential election results in the North-West region

Division	Registered voters	Number of voters	Participation rate %	CPDM	SDF
Boyo	58,486	37,141	63.50%	41.00%	56.15%
Bui	129,845	79,825	61.47%	48.77%	49.38%
Donga-Mantung	116,073	75,153	64.74%	49.46%	48.52%
Menchum	61,816	34,594	55.96%	51.49%	44.21%
Mezam	217,656	111,275	51.12%	26.05%	70.80%
Momo	74,429	41,815	56.18%	39.43%	57.00%
Ngo-Ketunjia	82,827	50,150	60.54%	56.97%	41.25%

Source: Elections Cameroon NW Region, 09 October 2011 Presidential Elections

Table 8: 2018 presidential election results in the South-West region

Division	Registered voters	Number of voters	Participation rate %	CPDM	SDF
Fako	143,743	22,800	15.86%	70.79%	14.48%
Kupe-Manengouba	36,096	15,916	44.09%	83.46%	10.90%
Lebialem	22,082	4,191	18.98%	85.64%	9.22%
Manyu	52,597	10,096	19.20%	79.76%	11.11%
Meme	89,284	3,190	3.57%	83.99%	9.59%
Ndian	30,425	3,454	11.35%	74.70%	21.48%

Source: Elections Cameroon NW Region, 07 October 2018 Presidential Elections

Table 9: 2011 presidential election results in the South-West region

Division	Registered voters	Number of voters	Participation rate %	CPDM	SDF
Fako	181,271	94,797	52.29%	50.28%	38.87%
Kupe-Manengouba	67,341	38,885	57.74%	52.72%	11.53%
Lebialem	84,746	67,833	80.04%	80.59%	13.18%
Manyu	115,235	85,245	73.97%	67.42%	2.61%
Meme	139,608	71,073	50.90%	52.93%	32.86%
Ndian	63,960	39,245	61.35%	80.81%	10.93%

Source: Elections Cameroon NW Region, 09 October 2011 Presidential Elections

The CPDM victory in the NW and SW in 2018 greatly changed the power structure in the country though the CPDM has always had the majority. The change in power structure essentially affected the opposition that lost the lone parliamentary group held by the SDF. The SDF also lost all its elected seats in the Senate reducing its members from 14 in 2013 to only one (1) appointed senator out of a hundred. According to the state-run newspaper Cameroon Tribune (2020), “History in the CPDM victory is that it has almost dislodged the Social Democratic Front (SDF) from the North-West (NW) Region”. The NW has always been the SDF stronghold, but this completely changed with the crisis/armed conflict. The party registered its worst results in the Region since its first elections in 1992. On the other hand, the CPDM made huge strides taking over all the municipal councils but two (2) and all but two (2) parliamentary seats in the region (Elections Cameroon 2020). For the first time since 1997, the SDF came out of the legislative elections without a parliamentary group. Since the CPDM had the majority of municipal councils, it was quite easy for the party in the regional elections as the voters in this election were municipal councilors (Cameroon Tribune, 2020). According to The Guardian Post (2020), critics described the CPDM crushing victory as a “mockery to Cameroon’s democracy”. It reported that the CPDM was “in a fix” with the sweeping victory and was in negotiations with the SDF to offer the party some seats in parliament and some councils. This according to the Newspaper was because the CPDM was concerned that the SDF may join forces with the separatists following the “shameful” defeat. The CPDM refuted reports of negotiations with the SDF and said their victory was earned. This, however, was not the first time such an allegation was raised by the media or academia. Takougang (2003) noted that the 2002 municipal and parliamentary elections had similar reports.

Table 10: General election results (2018-2023)

Presidential Elections 2018	National %	% in NW/SW Region	% in 2013
CPDM	71.28	NW 81,74 SW 77,69	77.99
SDF	03.35	NW 10,41 SW 12,72	10.71
Senatorial Elections 2018	Overall number of seats	Seats in NW/SW	Seats in 2013
CPDM	93/100	NW 03 (Appointed) SW 10 (03 appointed)	86 10 10
SDF	07/100	NW 07 SW 00	14 (Oher Regions) 00 00
Senatorial Elections 2023			
CPDM	95/100 (Won all 70 elective seats. 05 opposition appointed)	NW 09 SW 09	
SDF	01/100 (Appointed)	NW 01 SW 00	
Legislative Elections 2020	Overall number of seats	Seats in NW/SW	Seats in 2013
CPDM	156/180	NW 18/20 SW 15/15	148 7 14
SDF	5/180	NW 2 SW 0	18 13 1
Municipal Elections 2020	Overall number of councils	Councils in NW/SW	Councils in 2013
CPDM		NW 34 SW 33	13 29
SDF		NW 2 SW 0	22 4
Regional Elections 2020	Overall number of regional councilors	Regional councilors in NW/SW	
CPDM	613/700	NW 70/70 SW 70/70	No elections x x
SDF	Boycotts	0	x

Table 4.10 samples the various election results from 2018 to 2023 including the 2018 Presidential election, 2018 and 2023 Senatorial elections, 2020 Legislative and Municipal elections, and the 2020 Regional elections. The table focuses on the CPDM and the SDF parties because these are the major parties that were affected negatively or positively by the various security concerns in question. The choice of the two parties is to demonstrate how security has affected power and for the most part how Biya's party—the CPDM has benefitted from the security issues in the Anglophone regions. The MRC could have been included as it played a major role in the presidential elections, but the party boycotted the legislative and municipal elections, the regional elections and the 2023 senatorial elections. Though their absence gave the CPDM an easy win in MRC dominated areas in other parts of the country, this research focused on the results that had direct links to security. The table also includes results from the 2011 presidential elections and the 2013 senatorial, legislative, and parliamentary elections to show the changes brought in by the security crisis. Thus, the choice of war affected the participation rate and consequently the competitiveness. National security also affected the selection of representatives as the people did not get the chance to participate fully because of the conflict, hence, the effects on governance.

a. Selection of representatives

This indicator examines the competitive nature of the elections and will address these questions from Freedom House: Has the selection of a system for choosing legislative representatives (such as proportional versus majoritarian) been improperly manipulated to advance certain political interests or to influence the electoral results? Did major opposition parties choose to boycott the most recent elections rather than participate in a flawed process?

In 2023, the CPDM won all the 70 elective seats in the senate. Out of the 100 in total, 30 are appointed by the Head of State. This time he only appointed five opposition senators, leaving the CPDM with 95 senators out of 100. This victory was easy for the CPDM because the grounds were already set in the 2020 municipal election. Senators are elected by municipal councilors and the CPDM had won nearly all councils in the NW and SW regions and in most of the other parts of the country. This victory was due to the low turnout that resulted from the government's refusal to call for a ceasefire in the Anglophone zones as demonstrated above. In other parts

of the country, it was arguably owed to the MRC boycott as it gave the CPDM an easy win in the MRC dominated areas. The MRC said it boycotted the elections because the electoral code was flawed and only favored the CPDM and because of government's refusal to end the Anglophone crisis (MRC, 2019). In other words, the security state in the Anglophone regions was not suitable for elections in the country. Thus, while the MRC boycotted the election citing security concerns, the government exploited the situation to make political gains. This also resonates with the theme of "reluctance to address major concerns" as soon after the elections Biya recognized the need to fix the electoral code (Biya 2020a). Eventually, the councils secured in the 2020 municipal elections made it possible for the CPDM to win all the seats in the senate in 2023. This in other words was a predefined situation, hence, the effects of national security on democracy and governance.

b. Electoral process

While others measure democracy by looking at election results basically, Freedom House goes further to look at the electoral process especially how free and fair the elections were. One of the questions to determine this is whether independent, established, and reputable national and/or international election monitoring organizations judge the most recent election for head of government to have met democratic standards?

According to O'Donnell and Gramer (2018), the government paid what they call "zombie observers" to stand in for international observers and report on the credibility of elections held in the country. In the 2018, Transparency International denied a group of foreign men and women who claimed to be their representatives in the presidential elections that year (O'Donnell and Gramer, 2018). These individuals claimed that the elections were perfect contrary to allegations from the opposition and other groups that the elections were marred by mass irregularities. According to Transparency International (2018), *"a deliberate attempt to impersonate Transparency International or knowingly portray non-affiliated individuals as employees of the anti-corruption watchdog is completely unacceptable. At this critical time for democracy in Cameroon, Transparency International and Transparency International Cameroon urge all parties in politics and media to act responsibly and with integrity in their communications around the election and results"*.

The evaluation from these individuals only confirmed O'Donnell and Gramer claim that the government operates with 'zombie observers' to deter international pressure on good governance and freedom. This was the first time it was reported that the government used fake observers. More so, the image of the country was also crucial to the government given that the elections were taking place in the middle of an armed conflict. Thus, if this is the first time such fraud has been reported, then it only points to the effects of security on democracy given that the fake observers toed government's line that security did not affect the elections though the results showed otherwise.

c. Transparency and fairness

Was the vote count transparent and timely, and were the official results reported honestly to the public? Were voters able to vote for the candidate or party of their choice without undue pressure or intimidation? Are election commissions or other election authorities free from government or other pressure and interference? (Freedom House).

The opposition contested the various election results at the Constitutional Council and for the most part they cited the low voter turnout as a consequence of insecurity and a reason to annul the results. However, the Council downplayed and dismissed their grievances (Freedom House, 2020). In the case of the 2018 presidential election, the SDF argued that the election results were not representative or credible because of the low turnout and the irregularities (Enonchong, 2020: 165). To the party, the government did not provide enough security measures, which forced the people to stay at home. In turn, Elecam argued that the government had provided ample security. Though the SDF sufficiently demonstrated that insecurity was a hindrance in these regions, including the fact that the Prime Minister, Head of Government, and other state officials could not vote in their constituencies in the North-West region and had publicly cited insecurity as the reason for their demand to Elecam to change their polling stations, the Constitutional Council still went with Elecam's argument that there was enough security (Constitutional Council, 2018a). As is the case with government communication examined above, the Constitutional Council demonstrated similar dismissive and evasive traits and argued that the low voter turnout was only indicative of the popular exercise of the freedom to vote or to abstain from voting and could not be attributed to the insecurity in these regions and

that there was no legally prescribed minimum threshold for participation (Constitutional Council 2018b). Notwithstanding the Prime Minister's inability to vote in his base, the Council rather took a nonchalant approach to the issue of security, which disenfranchised the SDF from its political base. This ties in with the theme of "Reluctance to Address Major Concerns" seen above in which the government adopts a denial approach, rejecting the existence of a problem. This also addresses the question of fairness in the judiciary. Nevertheless, the Council granted reruns for a few cases in the legislative and municipal elections in the NW and SW regions. However, the same security and fraud concerns that were accepted for the cancellation of these results happened to be similar reasons that the Council dismissed in the Presidential elections (Freedom House, 2020). However, there was still a low turnout in the re-run and the CPDM won most of the contested seats (10 in the North-West and the lone seat in the South-West). As stated in the literature, the Constitutional Council members are appointed by the Head of State and in this case, some of them were former members of the ruling party. This is argued to have played a role in the dismissal of opposition complaints. One of the MRC demands during the hearings was the disqualification of most members of the Council because of their CPDM membership (MRC, 2019). According to the party, these members violated the provisions of the law on compatibilities and were at the behest of the CPDM. In the party's view, there was no election in the NW and SW regions given that the security conditions were not favorable for elections.

Moreover, the MRC also provided 32 unsigned Divisional election records that accorded the CPDM 1,800,000 votes (MRC, 2019). Nevertheless, the Constitutional Council dismissed these justifications and ruled in favor of the CPDM. Enonchong (2020: 165) argues that by failing to address the substantive concerns brought up during these sessions, the Council was unable to establish constitutional and legal principles that would strengthen the democratic process but instead it established a structure that benefits the current administration and the CPDM significantly. This ties in with the argument that the government used the security situation to make political gains at the detriment of democratic principles and good governance. The security situation in the NW and SW thus affected both the participation, competition, government functioning, and justice in this period, hence the effect on democracy and governance.

Furthermore, another complaint from the SDF at the Constitutional Council hearing was about gross electoral malpractices (Constitutional Council, 2018c). The party challenged the 2018 presidential election results in the entire SW region and those in Kupe-Manengouba and Lebialem Divisions in particular (Enonchong, 2020: 160). According to Decision No. 008/CE/CC/2018 of the Constitutional Council (2018d), the petitioner who had acted as the SDF representative for the Regional Supervisory Commission complained about closing of the polling station before the statutory time thereby disenfranchising voters. He also claimed that the CPDM representative was the only signatory of the report from the polling station, and excluded the other members of the polling commission, who did not receive a copy of the report. More so, according to the SDF, the tally sheet accompanying the report was riddled with cancellations that were not endorsed or signed by any of the members of the polling commission (Enonchong, 2020). This was in violation of the Electoral Code section 115 (1), (2) which states that:

(1) The results of the poll shall forthwith to enter into a report. Such a report, which shall be made in as many copies as there are members plus 2 (two), shall be closed and signed by all the members.

(2) A copy of the report shall be handed to each member of the Local Polling Commission present and having signed it” (Electoral code of Cameroon).

However, the Council argued that the party’s representative had no standing by virtue of section 132(2) of the Electoral Code, which state that:

(2) “The Constitutional Council shall rule on all petitions filed by any candidate, any political party which took part in the election or any person serving as a representative of the Administration for the election, requesting the total or partial cancellation of election operations” (Electoral code of Cameroon).

This meant that notwithstanding what the SDF representative and others witnessed, the Council was not ready to hear from them or consider any investigation. Moreover, the MRC also corroborated the SDF petition and reported fraud and irregularities in their reports and complaints to the Council (MRC 2019). Due to the security situation in the Anglophone regions, some observers could not represent their various parties in the election leaving the reports solely in the hands of the CPDM that had security clearance. Thus, to the MRC, the election in these

regions was null (MRC, 2019). However, the Constitutional Council validated the results in favor of the CPDM.

Additionally, on the issue of voter freedom, voters faced various constraints that possibly influenced their choices. When the Anglophone protests began in 2016, the military responded with indiscriminate force, assaulting, arresting, and killing people in these regions (Amnesty International 2016). They also went on a scorched earth campaign, burning down entire villages sometimes with inhabitants stuck inside (Human Rights Watch, 2022; Kindzeka, 2018; Relief Web, 2017). This approach will naturally create mistrust between the military and the public. In the 2018 Presidential elections, polling stations were placed in military barracks and other areas with military presence (African Reality News, 2018). In addition, most polling stations in the NW and SW were moved from their assigned positions to military occupied areas. The government argued that the move was aimed at ensuring security. The opposition protested this move arguing that it was illegal to have polling stations in military barracks (African Reality News, 2018). Elecama in return referred to section 96 (4) of the electoral code which states that every polling station shall be located in public premises or in premises open to the public (SBBC, 2018). In their view, military barracks are open to the public. However, ACE, an electoral knowledge network disagrees and notes: *“the location of polling stations must be in an ideologically neutral site in order not to discourage the free expression of the vote. In this sense, polling stations should not be located in police stations, army barracks, headquarters of political parties, offices of religious groups and government buildings in times of political transition. On the contrary, it is appropriate to use schools as polling stations”* (ACE, 2012). Considering that there could be mistrust between the public and the military given the military actions in these areas, hosting polling stations in military barracks or filling polling stations with soldiers could not guarantee freedom, especially for the opposition. In this regard, the MRC argued that the military could scare off voters (MRC, 2019). Given the “hammer” in the “hammer and lies” national security approach, it can be argued here in line with the MRC that the presence of soldiers in polling stations did not allow for a free and fair election in these regions. Moreover, separatists had called for a boycott of the election and threatened the potential voters with violence.

d. Judiciary and fairness in elections

Is the judiciary independent of political control and influence? Is the judiciary independent of powerful private interests, whether legal or illegal? (Freedom House)

By virtue of article 48(1) of the Constitution of Cameroon, the Constitutional Council shall ensure the regularity of presidential elections, parliamentary elections and referendum operations and proclaim the results thereof. In addition, section 40 of the Constitutional Council Law provides that the Council shall ensure that voting is free and fair. According to Samah and Ajereboh (2022: 40), these roles are conflicting because they do not guarantee fairness given that the Council has to address complaints from competing parties and declare results as well. They further doubt the fairness of the Council by adding that the Council appoints members to chair the vote-counting committees. This doubt stems from the fact that the head of state appointed members of the CPDM to the Council and putting them in charge of vote counting will not warrant fairness. In the last Council adjustments in April 2020, Biya appointed Joseph Owona who is a former Secretary General at the presidency and a former minister of Education in the same regime.

Notwithstanding the appointments, the Council was expected to consider and perhaps investigate the complaints that came from the ground during the various hearings to ensure fairness perchance in future elections. However, the council utterly disregarded the concerns and focused more on the legal basis that allowed it to dismiss the petitions rather than on alternative methods to address the inconsistencies (Enonchong, 2020). According to her, the Council adopted an avoidance technique, by shying away from the substantive aspects of complaints and instead favored a very textual approach to the interpretation of the law. Most petitions in these hearings were dismissed on the basis that the irregularities would have no effect on the results as per the relevant statute. The accusations included lack of security that prevented voters from casting ballots, stuffing of ballot boxes in the presence of voters, the registration of certain voters on several electoral registers and the issuing and distribution of multiple voter cards to them (Constitutional Council, 2018: a, b, c, d).

In one instance, Elecam was accused of colluding with the CPDM in the 2018 presidential election. According to Enonchong (2020), the electoral body was said to have allowed top government officials like the Prime Minister and the president of

the senate (both members of the CPDM) to vote outside of the constituencies thereby violating the electoral code. Moreover, the senate president was permitted to change his constituency after the legal time prescribed by the law had elapsed. In the PM's case, he cited insecurity as a reason for not being able to vote in his district. While Elecam permitted this, most Anglophones, who were internally displaced by the conflict were not allowed to vote elsewhere else (Enonchong, 2020: 165). Notwithstanding the evidence presented by the opposition, Enonchong notes that the Council made no substantive comments except a referral to the provision of the law that allows it to reject a petition on the ground that it has no effect on the election results. These were serious allegations that pointed to the violation of constitutional and electoral provisions and therefore required further investigations or condemnations from the Council. Moreover, the Council is charged by law to compulsorily refer such issues to the electoral body—Elecam for further probe. Elecam in turn has to further investigations and refer the case to the prosecutor in the instance where the claims are found to be criminal (Electoral Code, 2012). However, the Council chose to simply dismiss the petitions without further action. This thesis argues here that the Council's dismissal of petitions from the crisis zone was simply a continuation of the exploitation of the security situation to the advantage of the CPDM. As Samah and Ajerebdo (2022) have argued, getting involved in election management as the Council does in vote counting and passing judgment on election related grievances does not guarantee impartiality on the part of the Council. In other words, the Council's verdict was a continuation of the security approach that stalled participation. It is also a continuation of downplaying issues of importance as seen in government communication between 2014 and 2023.

2. Rule of Law, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association

Rule of law, freedom of expression and freedom of association are intrinsically interwoven because the violation of one means the violation of the other. According to the Preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon section (16), *“the freedom of communication, of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, and of trade unionism, as well as the right to strike shall be guaranteed under the conditions fixed by law”*. The following questions from Freedom House will guide the assessment of these factors in measuring the effects of security on democracy and governance in Cameroon: Are participants in peaceful demonstrations intimidated,

arrested, or assaulted? Are peaceful protesters detained by police in order to prevent them from engaging in such actions? Are defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, protected? Do law enforcement and other security officials operate professionally, independently, and accountably? Do law enforcement officials make arbitrary arrests and detentions without warrants, or fabricate or plant evidence on suspects? Do law enforcement and other security officials fail to uphold due process because of influence by non-state actors, including organized crime, powerful commercial interests, or other groups? Are defendants' rights, including the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, protected? Is violent crime common, either in particular areas or among the general population? Is the population subjected to physical harm, forced removal, or other acts of violence or terror due to civil conflict or war? (Freedom House)

After weeks of protests and a brutal military response in the last months of 2016, the government in January 2017, decided to end talks with the Anglophone Consortium and arrested barrister Nkongho Felix Agbor-Balla and Dr Fontem Aforteka'a Neba, respectively the President and Secretary-General of the Consortium. Both were whisked from the SW region and transported to the Yaoundé central prison (Amnesty International, 2017b). Like them, hundreds of others arbitrarily arrested in the NW and SW were taken to the same prison in Yaoundé over the course of the conflict. These persons included journalists, students, teachers, and others who were vocal about the Anglophone Problem or those randomly arrested for minor issues like the lack of identification at the time of control (Amnesty International, 2017b). Even a sitting supreme court judge, Ayah Paul Abine was also arrested for his views on the Anglophone issue (Patrick, 2023). According to Human Rights Watch (2020), *“Cameroonian authorities have arbitrarily arrested critics of the government and political opponents on multiple occasions, and security forces have used excessive and indiscriminate force to stifle other opposition-led demonstrations”*.

Government talks with the Anglophone Consortium ended when the coalition demanded for a return to the 1961 federal form of state as a final solution to the Anglophone Problem. Those arrested were charged by a military court with the following crimes (Amnesty International, 2017a):

- *hostility against the government*

- *secession*
- *civil war*
- *propagation of false information*
- *collective resistance*
- *Incitement to take up arms.*

The Consortium had maintained that their protests were peaceful. On January 1, 2017, the Consortium cancelled a planned protest for fear that the protest may turn violent. In the communique, (press release No: 11), it is mentioned as follows: *We have been intimated that some of the groups involved in the struggle for the return to the 1961 federation have been infiltrated by agents of the government. Their aim is to lure innocent, unsuspecting, unarmed citizens of West Cameroon to the streets where there will be mass arrests and even summary executions, in fact, a blood bath. This will provide a motive for arresting some union leaders and dismantle the consortium*” (Anglophone Consortium, 2017).

Even with the planned protests called off, the government halted negotiations with the group and banned them alongside other Anglophone groups advocating for a similar cause or for secession. The Consortium’s demand aligned with the Anglophone claim that the 1961 pact between the then British Southern Cameroon and the Republic of Cameroun was not respected and should be revisited for a better functioning of the two systems adopted by those who made the agreement. President Biya himself in an interview in France acknowledged this belief, saying that the intention of the successive governments was to assimilate Anglophones into the Francophone culture and ways, which have so far failed (Biya, 2019a). Despite this acknowledgement, the government nonetheless framed the demand for a federal system as a security issue and tagged those involved as terrorists. The “broad” law on terrorism thus became the basis of judging these individuals as they were assigned to a military court.

Besides the Consortium members and Anglophones, some political parties, notably the MRC also suffered a similar fate. In 2020, over 500 people were arrested during one of the MRC street protests including the party head who was put under house arrest from September to December of 2020 (Amnesty international, 2020). He had previously spent 10 months (January to October 2019) at the Yaoundé Central

Prison for the following charges: *insurrection, hostility against the homeland, criminal association, threats to public order, rebellion, inciting insurrection* (Human Rights Watch, 2019). He, alongside hundreds of his supporters, was charged by a military court. Though Kamto's charges were later dropped, they carried a death penalty if he was found guilty (Human Rights Watch, 2019). He was arrested in Douala in the Littoral Region and like the Consortium leaders and other Anglophones, he was transported to the Yaoundé Central Prison in the Center Region. Some of his supporters arrested in 2020 were again charged by a military court with the following accusations (Amnesty International, 2020):

Attempted insurgency, unauthorized public demonstration and gathering, contempt to the President of the Republic, holding "two signs calling for the departure of President Biya", attempted revolt, rebellion, aggravated assembly, lack of national identity card.

These arrests were carried out on the basis that the party violated the government's ban on the protests. However, in banning the protests, the government acknowledged the party's right to protest but forcefully stopped the marches, nonetheless. According to Paul Atanga Nji (2019a), the Minister of Territorial Administration, *"The laws of the republic allow legally registered parties to freely exercise their activities, but in strict compliance with the regulations in force"*.

The regulations he referred to stipulate that political parties should apply for accreditations from the local administrators where they intend to carry out the protests. The local authority will then determine if the protest can take place or not and will issue a notice that can be contested in the High Court within eight days if denied (Articles 3,4,6 and 7 of Law No. 90/55 of 1990). However, the government had made it difficult for any political party to stage any authorized protests within this period. In the case of the MRC, ministers organized press conferences and banned the protests before the local authority could decide. Besides, it is difficult for any local authority to contradict his/her superiors and the press conferences directly or indirectly affected the local authorities' decisions. This is seen in the fact that every demand from the MRC, other political parties and even some civil society groups were turned down by the local authorities within this period (Freedom House, 2022). Furthermore, Article 45 of the constitution (Constitution of Cameroon, Article 45) states that *"Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements*

shall, following the publication, override national laws, provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement”.

In other words, the MRC and other political parties were free to demonstrate even without seeking the validation of the state because Cameroon is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This treaty guarantees freedom of expression and association. Nevertheless, the MRC said it had made the demands where necessary, but the demands were rejected (MRC 2019). In 2020, an MRC official was reported to have been arrested at a Senior Divisional Officer’s (SDO) office in the West Region where he went to deposit his party’s demand for authorization to protest (Equinox TV, 2020). The said march was banned by ministers and governors (not the authorities assigned by the law) even before the party could make the demand. In a press briefing, the Minister of Communication (Sadi, 2020a) announced that those caught participating in the protest would face the law on terrorism: *“...the government hereby recalls that such acts are specified in and punished by the penal code as well as the relevant provisions of law No. 2014/028 of 23 December 2014 on the suppression of terrorist acts. Accordingly, all those associating with such schemes should expect to be brought to book before the competent judicial authorities. In this regard, the defence and security forces will take every necessary step to strictly maintain law and order as well as social peace”.* A similar rhetoric was repeated by other ministers, governors, and divisional officers in most of the protests announced by the MRC or SDF. Those arrested in such demonstrations were charged with terrorism and insurrection amongst other allegations as seen above.

According to Amnesty International (2022), more than 1,000 Anglophones arrested between 2016 and 2021 in relation to the Anglophone crisis were held in at least 10 prisons across the country, with most of them arbitrarily detained. Amongst them were those with a life sentence and those still on pre-trial for over five years (Amnesty International, 2022). According to the NGO, about 50 people, mostly MRC supporters, were sentenced by military courts for “insurrection”, “rebellion” and “endangering state security” in December 2021. This included Kamto’s spokesperson, the MRC first vice president, and president of the MRC women’s wing who were all given seven years imprisonment for taking part in the street protests (Amnesty International, 2022).

a. Application of law on terrorism

In December 2014, the government passed a law on terrorism – law No. 2014/028, to guide court proceeding on those arrested within the framework of Boko Haram activities. The law has a maximum penalty of death, and allows authorities to detain indefinitely those accused of terrorism. It also provides for prosecution in military courts. Though Cameroon ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights that prohibits the judging of civilians in military courts, it still placed the law on terrorism under the military courts. Biya (2014) himself was sensitive to criticisms of this law and insisted that the law was meant for those desecrating the borders and not for citizens exercising their civil rights: *“The growing threats on our borders have prompted us to take measures to safeguard against their effects on our internal security. Such is the purport of the law on the suppression of terrorism which Parliament recently passed by a large majority. It is far from serving as a pretext for restricting civil liberties, as claimed by some ill-intentioned people”*.

His defense of the law came after critics pointed out that the law was too broad and could be used in suppressing human rights. With the outbreak of new security challenges, Biya’s defense seemingly became questionable. From 2016, many Anglophone and MRC detainees became the target of this law. Amongst the critics of this law was Amnesty International (2018) that described the law as “deeply flawed”. The literature section reviewed what has been said about this law and the conclusion showed that contrary to the declaration made by President Biya, the law was widely used as an instrument of oppression. This law was extensively applied in the Anglophone crisis and the post electoral/MRC crisis. In other words, this law became the basis of dealing with security in the country as Quintal (2017) noted. Contrary to Biya’s declaration, this law was used on unarmed civilians, including those with minor offenses as described by the government itself when it released Anglophone detainees in 2017. Under this law, the MRC leader and many of his followers were detained for 10 months thus killing their protest motive and holding them back from preparing for subsequent elections.

Furthermore, this law was used alongside the law on secession enacted in 2016. In 2020, the Minister of Territorial Administration (Paul, 2020a) used this law and others to threaten potential protesters who planned to march against the non-

review of the electoral code and government's delay to end the Anglophone crisis:

“It has come to my knowledge that some “political parties” losing steam have made some irresponsible declarations by putting some preconditions for the holding of Regional Election. This mischievous plan is aimed at destabilizing republican institutions and is against H. E. PAUL BIYA, who incarnates them...Permit me highlight a number of legal provisions that will be applied immediately if these irresponsible politicians ever attempt to disrupt the organization of December 6 Regional elections. They include Law No 2016/007 12 July 2016 Section 111: Secession Whoever undertakes in whatever manner to infringe on the territorial integrity of the Republic shall be punished with imprisonment for life...”

This suggests the abuse of the law, hence, the effect on governance. The protests were meant to address issues affecting the state, like the inconsistency in the electoral code and the ongoing war in the English-speaking regions. The minister's mention of the law on secession in matters that do not touch on the infringement of territorial integrity suggests how this law was used as a coercive tool. Consequently, those arrested were unsurprisingly judged under this law and in military courts (Amnesty International, 2020).

In 2019, MRC members including the leader of the party Maurice Kamto were only released by a presidential pardon after national and international pressure on the government. The pardon also involved some Anglophone detainees, who were said to have committed “minor crimes” according to the government. This category was also judged by military courts under the law on terrorism. Amnesty International (2022) for instance reported the case of Penn Terence Khan, a vice principal of a high school in Bamenda, NW region who was arrested on 17 January 2017 and sentenced on 10 April 2018 to 12 years in prison and fined 15 million CFA francs (24,200\$) by the Yaoundé military court. According to the organization, he was charged with “*complicity in secession, financing of terrorism and complicity with the rebellion*”. However, the only piece of evidence presented according to this organization was a T-shirt with the words “Diaspora South Africa Standing behind West Cameroonians 4 a Federal Cameroon” and “We are Cameroonians, we are not extremists” printed on it (Amnesty International 2022). This strengthens the perceived threat in the moderating variable and demonstrates how the government invented security threats before there was an actual threat by magnifying trivial

issues and branding protests as insurrections.

3. Media and Internet Freedom

Is the media directly or indirectly censored? Is self-censorship common among journalists (the term includes professional journalists, bloggers, and citizen journalists), especially when reporting on sensitive issues, including politics, social controversies, corruption, or the activities of powerful individuals? Are organizers blocked from using online media to plan or carry out a protest, for example through DDoS attacks or wholesale blackouts of internet or mobile services? Are public petitions, in which citizens gather signatures to support a particular policy or initiative, banned or severely restricted? (Freedom House)

According to Human Rights Watch (2020), at least eight journalists were among those arrested on September 22, 2020 during an MRC protest. The organization purports that some of these journalists were purposely targeted. In the period 2014-2023, the government organized several press conferences to either threaten or school the media on how to report. In a press conference prior to the MRC 2020 protests, the minister of communication Rene Sadi (2020d) warned journalists that: *if there is no democracy without press freedom, there is also no press freedom without social responsibility, without preservation of the freedoms of others, without respect for societal values and compliance with applicable law*". The conference was aimed at cautioning the media on their share of responsibility in the security crises. These threats or lectures focused on the idea of patriotism in news reporting. Since the Anglophone crisis began in 2016, the government labelled any argument contrary to its narrative as unpatriotic as seen in the themes. Several journalists of a Douala based media house-Equinox TV that extensively reported on the Anglophone crisis and the MRC protests were either summoned for questioning by the government, arrested or suspended by the media regulatory organ on the charges of broadcasting fake news (Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) 2022; Kindzeka 2018). The government also threatened severally to shut down the TV station for allowing debates on federalism, the Anglophone crisis, or the MRC protests (Freedom House, 2022). According to Freedom House (2022), media regulator - the National Communication Council (NCC) is known for intimidating private press outlets and journalists while overlooking the activities of the national broadcaster CRTV (Cameroon Radio Television) that overtly favor the CPDM and

the government. Describing journalists in one of his press briefings, the minister of Territorial Administration Atanga Nji Paul (2020e) said the following: *“They have one main objective, just to sabotage government action, to promote secessionist tendencies... I urge them to be responsible. Those who do not want to respect the laws will be booked as being recalcitrant and will be treated as such”*. Similarly, Rene Sadi (2020d) noted that *“the journalist is neither an adventurer, nor a hired gunman, nor a factotum serving shameful and harmful ideologies”*. This was in reference to reporting or broadcasting debates on the Anglophone crisis and MRC protests.

According to Amnesty International (2022), two journalists, Tsi Conrad and Mancho Bibixy were in 2018 sentenced by a military court to 15 years in prison each for terrorism related offences. The human rights agency notes that both were vocal on Anglophone protests and Mancho even took the lead in certain cases. Al Jazeera (2020) on its part reported the death of another journalist Samuel Wazizi who died in police detention in the city of Buea in the SW Region. According to the news outlet, he was accused of *“speaking critically on the air about the authorities and their handling of the crisis”*. Addressing the issue, the Minister of Territorial Administration rather threatened to be hard on other journalist who do not align with government’s approach (Paul, 2020e). Furthermore, Quintal (2017) demonstrates how the law on terrorism has been detrimental to journalists who report on Boko Haram issues and the Anglophone crisis, as well as those critical of the regime. He quotes an English language newspaper editor, who said the following: *“The government conflates news coverage of militants or demonstrators with praise, and journalists don’t know what they can and cannot report safely, so they err on the side of caution.”* ... *“We are not told what the difference is about reporting the facts or acclaiming what is happening and we therefore run the risk of contravening the anti-terrorism law”*. This captures the situation of journalist in Cameroon between 2014 and 2023.

In addition, the government apparently embarked on dividing the press and encouraging those who favored its rhetoric. According to Rene Sadi (2020d), the Minister of Communication *“To those media professionals who have chosen to identify with this noble idea of journalism, the government has been supporting and will continue to support them in the exercise of their profession”*. This saw a division

especially with the English and French press that reported opposing sides of a story. The French papers were mostly very pro-government, using government terminology like terrorists, secessionists to refer to Anglophone protesters or separatist fighters, while English newspaper were moderate on these issues.

Furthermore, on September 30, 2017, the government shut down access to internet in the NW and SW regions as protests heightened (Africa News 2018, Aljazeera 2018). This shutdown lasted until January 2018. This was the second shut down in a year. The first blackout that happened in January 2017 also lasted close to four months. According to Aljazeera (2018), the shutdown was aimed at quelling the protests and criticisms against the government. It was also aimed at disrupting the coordination between the protesters as activists had succeeded in instituting uniform boycotts observed across the Anglophone regions. The most successful of which was the “ghost town” that shut down activities on certain days of the week. The shutdowns caused two internet freedom groups - Access Now and Internet Sans Frontières (ISF) to sue the government of Cameroon for violation of freedoms (Africa News, 2018). These internet closures were just part of a larger censor on the people and the press.

a. NGO freedoms

Are non-governmental organizations free to pursue their activities or are legal requirements intended to prevent them from functioning freely? (Freedom House)

Between 2014 and 2023, the government continually accused NGO’s whose reports or activities did not favor them of trying to destabilize the country or of sponsoring separatists. In one of the press conferences addressing an NGO report, Tchiroma Bakary (2018b) said this:

“I cannot conclude my statement without strongly denouncing the relentlessness of “International Crisis Group”. The NGO has for several years now specialized in maneuvers to destabilize our country by means of manipulation and prophecies of doom. To date, there is no more doubt that the “International Crisis Group” is part and parcel of a huge conspiracy aimed at destabilizing out nation... The last report published by this NGO which is an instrument for financial and mining interest is particularly illustrative. Cameroonians should therefore remain vigilant against the maneuvers of this evil NGO, its foreign sponsors, as well as local

accomplices”.

The institution had reported on the violent activities of government forces that that led to several deaths and property loss. Even though the government owned up to some of the accusations, it maintained that these organizations were out to undermine the “peace” in the country. In another instance, Rene Sadi (2020d), the Minister of Communication accused another NGO of similar offences: *“The Non-Governmental Organization called ‘Human Rights Watch’ published on February 25, 2020, an overtly biased and essentially incriminating report against the National Defense and Security Forces...The Government of Cameroon strongly denounces this approach, which undeniably illustrates the bad faith of these organizations which are tirelessly determined to undermine the image of Cameroon and the stability of our institutions”.* Besides the rights groups, the government also accused the humanitarian NGO “Doctors without Borders” of using their health facilities as “refuges for separatists secessionists.” The organization that offers medical assistance to people without access, especially in conflict zones finally suspended their activities in the Anglophone regions in 2022 due to these accusations and agitation from the government (Quenum, 2022).

Table 11: Cameroon’s democracy and governance ranking by popular indexes (2014-2023)

Index	Year 2014	and 2015	Ranking 2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Freedom House	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free	12/100 Not Free
Economist Intelligent Unit	3.46/10 Authoritarian	3.61/10 Authoritarian	3.28/10 Authoritarian	3.61/10 Authoritarian	3.28/10 Authoritarian	2.85/10 Authoritarian	2.77/10 Authoritarian	2.56/10 Authoritarian	2.56/10 Authoritarian	
Our World in Data	0.33/1	0.33/1	0.31/1	0.30/1	0.29/1	0.28	0.29/1	0.29/1	0.30/1	

Table 12: Cameroon’s democracy and governance ranking by popular indexes (2005-2013)

Index	Year	and	Ranking						
Index	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Freedom House	12/100	12/100	12/100	12/100	12/100	12/100	12/100	12/100	12/100
	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free	Not Free
	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
Economist Intelligent Unit		3.27/10	3.46/10	3.41/10	3.41/10	3.44/10	3.41/10	3.41/10	3.66/10
Our World in Data	0.32/1	0.32/1	0.32/1	0.32/1	0.32/1	0.32/1	0.32/1	0.33/1	0.32

Other indexes mentioned here are those that use same or similar measurements as the four discussed in chapter III.

The tables present the ratings from 2014 to 2023 and from 2005 to 2013. This is to illustrate how democracy and governance in the country performed prior and after 2014. Freedom House ratings show that Cameroon consistently had aggregate score of six (6) giving 12 in total on 100. This indicates that there has been a consistent pattern in Cameroon politics nine years prior to 2014. However, the difference between these two periods lies in the tactics employed and in the events that animated the periods. The independent and dependent variables seemed to be constant, but the mediating and moderating variables were different though they gave similar results in this index. In other words, the national security approach stayed the same as “Hammer and Lies” but the combination of elections and security threats was lacking in the earlier period. The elections between 2018 and 2023 illuminated the effects of national security on democracy and governance in Cameroon. The changes can be seen in the other two measures (Economist Intelligence Unit and Our World in Data) as the figures drop from three to two showing a downward movement in the performance of democracy and governance.

The table below compares the different activities prior and during the period 2014-2023. This is to buttress the correlation between the independent variable—national security and the dependent variables—democracy and governance. It also demonstrates why Cameroon scored low points in both periods in the indexes.

Table 13: Low democracy performance difference in activities before and after 2014

Before 2014	2014-2023
Constitutional change	Delayed solutions to armed conflict
Military coercion	Increased military coercion because of the armed conflict
Coerce Opposition	Use the law against opposition
Corruption	Use of military force
Election rigging	Use of military force
Media manipulation	Use of terrorism law

The thesis aimed to test the following hypothesis:

H0 – National security has no effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

H1 – National security has a positive effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

H2 – National security has a negative effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon.

The established link between national security, democracy and governance in Cameroon is consistent with H2. The analysis rejects H0 and H1 because it shows a pattern of violations of the measured democratic and good governance categories. This includes political participation, political competitiveness, civil liberties, rule of law and government functioning. The effects of the armed conflict and perceived threat (moderating variable) show a direct influence on the mediating variable (elections) and thus the effect of national security on democracy and governance. Hence, H0 cannot be true. Secondly, the national security approach to these threats has not shown any positive effect on democracy and governance given that it has only helped to stall civil liberties and rule of law, hence, H1 cannot be true. Consequently, H2 is true because national security is seen to have affected democracy and governance negatively in Cameroon between 2014 and 2023 in all the aspects examined.

V. CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS

The aim of this research was to demonstrate how governments in a democracy use national security against democratic and good governance rules for political gains. The research sought to respond to the questions: How does national security affect democracy and governance in Cameroon?

To answer this question, the research used qualitative research methods and techniques, notably the case study method and the qualitative content analysis technique. This technique generated themes that were frequent in a number of selected government communication documents between 2014 and 2023. These themes included: security of the people, the unity narrative, lack of will to address major issues, agenda setting, praise for country's democracy, military vs terrorist, government above the law and praise for the head of state. Guided by critical security theories, results from the theme analysis showed that the government of Cameroon through its communication created a perceived security threat out of the Anglophone and MRC protests. This perceived threat was thus addressed as a security problem and handled with military force. The research demonstrated that the government created the perceived threat by prolonging or delaying solutions to a problem it acknowledged as in the case of the Anglophone Problem or by magnifying the problem in its communication like referring to federalism as secession or by presenting others as terrorists and dangerous to the state and justifying military actions in the field as a mission to safeguard the people and their property. More so, it did by using the law in the government's favor when its interest was involved and by denying others the chance to express themselves in protests or through the press. Moreover, the government created an image of the Head of State that presented him as the Hobbesian Leviathan - the only one capable of bringing peace and progress. His actions were praised and shown to the public as acts of generosity. Similarly, the government presented democracy in the country as effective even though civil liberties, press freedom, rule of law and other components of democracy were questionable in this period.

The counter reaction from the military approach in the Anglophone crisis led to an actual threat—an armed conflict, which continued in 2023. Both the perceived and actual threats (the moderating variable) therefore shaped Cameroon’s national security approach between 2014 and 2023 into what the literature described as “Hammer and Lies”. By hammer and lies, the literature explained that the government of Cameroon in this period adopted a military approach to the various crises while simultaneously denying the existence of the crises or the problem. It also demonstrated that the “lies” were aimed at keeping the international community away from the outcomes of this approach, a strategy described in the conceptual framework as minimizing the response cost. Furthermore, the coercive security approach was shown to be motivated by the mediating variable—election, which according to critical security theories gave the government a motive to justify the use of force. In this regard, the research demonstrated that there is a chain reaction between national security, democracy, and governance. According to critical security theories, states are likely to use a security situation to make political gains or to further control and limit citizens’ rights. The mediating variable – election, clearly demonstrated the effects of national security on democracy and governance in Cameroon between 2014 and 2023 as seen in the results. The results showed that since solutions were delayed to the armed conflict, one of which was a ceasefire, the participation rates in the 2018 presidential election went down from 58.01% in 2011 to 5.35% in the NW Region and from 65.82% in 2011 to 15.94% in the SW Region. The difference in participation rates and votes gained by the various parties especially in the NW Region showed how national security affected democracy and governance in terms of political participation, selection of representatives and government functioning. The CPDM in 2018 scored 81.74% in the NW up from 42.60% in 2011 compared to the SDF that scored 10.71% down from 54.75% in 2011 in the same region.

In addition, the study demonstrates that the national security approach affected the elections outcomes in that the MRC boycotted the legislative, municipal, and regional elections citing security and governance concerns. This helped the CPDM to win every contested seat in the senate, close to 90% of the parliamentary seats, 9 out of 10 regional councils and most of the municipal councils. The thesis also demonstrated that national security affected civil liberties and freedoms in that

the press was censored and journalists were imprisoned and some killed owing to their coverage of the various crises. Citizens were also denied the right to protest as demonstrated in the case of the MRC, Anglophones and other political parties that were denied authorization to protest. Moreso, NGOs that reported on the outcomes of the military approach were censored and some expelled.

In the literature review, it was seen that others looked at the relationship between national security, democracy, and governance from the effects of bad electoral practices and how they lead to insecurity. However, this thesis examined the reverse which is how national security affects democracy and governance. This effect can also be seen in the various democracy and governance indexes presented in chapter IV. Freedom House (2021) gave the country 16/100 on political rights and civil liberties. Transparency International (2022) ranked the Cameroon 142nd out of 180 in governance. The Economist (2022) classified the country as a dictatorship and ranked it 142nd in democracy application. According to Gros (1995), the military has been responsible for the slow pace of democratization in Africa (p121). This statement strengthens the link between the variables and illuminates H2 that has been seen to be true. The thesis rejected H0 and H1, which assumed that: H0–National security has no effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon and H1–National security has a positive effect on democracy and governance in Cameroon. The study found H2 to be valid. Thus, national security has a negative effect on democracy and governance. It found that when a country that has a democratic system fails to implement democracy correctly, the quality of governance is reduced or greatly affected. When rules and laws are twisted, it gives room for corruption and slow application of policies as well as abuse of human rights. The research does not however insinuate that the government of Cameroon made political strides between 2014 and 2023 only through the various security crises but that security played a major role. Hence, this study concludes that national security has a negative effect on the quality of democracy and governance in Cameroon. To create a balance Cameroon could:

- Revisit the electoral code and give every political party a chance to compete fairly.
- Amend the constitution and give the President less power than he has now.
- Revisit the Constitution and make the Constitutional Council and Election

Cameroon's positions elective rather than through presidential appointments.

- Give proper independence to the judiciary, legislative, Constitutional Council and Elections Cameroon
- Minimize party discipline and prioritize community representation.

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RESUME

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name/Surname: Beryu Yundze Gaston

EDUCATION

- ❖ **Bachelor:** 2009, English Modern Letters, University of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé (Cameroon)
- ❖ **Master's:** 2016, Political Science and International Relations (in English), Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul (Türkiye)
- ❖ **PhD:** 2024, Political Science and International Relations (in English), Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul (Türkiye)

WORK EXPERIENCE

- ❖ **10/02/2015–15/07/2021:** - Research Assistant (Volunteer) Africa Application and Research Center, Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul (Turkey)
- ❖ **03/02/2014–Present Freelance:** Writer/Self Employed, Istanbul (Turkey)
- ❖ Duties - Writing news and Proofreading
- ❖ **15/06/2015–15/09/2015:** Internship - SAHA Ratings SA, Istanbul (Turkey)
- ❖ Duties - Worked on Corporate Governance Index 2015 (A yearly publication by the company)
- ❖ **08/04/2012–15/12/2014:** Journalist - The Heron Ltd, Yaounde (Cameroon)
- ❖ Duties - Political desk editor/co-publisher, Proofreading, News gathering and reporting.
- ❖ **05/01/2009–04/03/2012:** Journalist - The Standard Tribune Ltd, Yaounde (Cameroon)
- ❖ Duties - News gathering and report writing, Metro desk editor (editing articles from other towns and cities), Proofreading, Assistant Marketing manager.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- ❖ Certificate in climate change journalism - Africa Adaptation Programme, Yaoundé (Cameroon)
- ❖ Attestation of Training in Tourism communication - Cameroon's Ministry of Tourism, Yaoundé (Cameroon)
- ❖ General-tourism reporting

PERSONAL SKILLS

- ❖ **Language Skills:** Mother tongue(s) English (Official), Lamnso
 - ❖ **Secondary Language(s):**
 - French C1 C1 C1 C1 B2 (Understanding, Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing)
 - Turkish A2 A2 A2 A2 A2 (Understanding, Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing)
- Levels:** A1 and A2: Basic user - B1 and B2: Independent user - C1 and C2: Proficient user
- ❖ **Communication skills:** Excellent communication skills gathered from my interaction with people as a journalist.
 - ❖ **Organizational-managerial skills/Leadership skills:** 2014/2015 leader of Cameroonian students in school; Istanbul Aydin University and Turkiye at large
President of Nso Student Union - Turkiye, 2016-2018 (A Cameroonian cultural group)
 - ❖ **Organizational skills:** Organized three working groups on research in African affairs in Turkiye as research assistant at the Africa Application and Research Center, Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul (Turkey)
 - ❖ **Job-related skills-Innovative skills:** As the assistant marketing manager at Standard Tribune, I proposed several marketing strategies that greatly enhanced the expansion of the newspaper.
 - ❖ **Digital skills:** good at MS Office Programs.
 - ❖ **Other skills:** Analytical Skills gathered from my PhD experience (From courses

like Research Methodology, Political Thought, Political Sociology, and others)

