

Cameroon

(CameroonRN1.5)

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This is one of a set of “random narratives” to complement our statistical findings in regard to civil war onsets. This is a draft of June 16, 2005; comments welcome.

Cameroon, situated on the Guinea Coast of West Africa, in the last half-millennium was subject to a Hausa-Fulani land invasion, Portuguese slave-trading on its coast, British commercial hegemony in palm oil and ivory in the 19th century, and eventually German sovereignty over much of what is today Cameroon in 1884 when the German government signed a treaty with the Doualas. But in the course of World War I, the French and British occupied the country and ultimately shared a League of Nations Mandate (and after World War II, these became UN Trust Territories) to rule Cameroon. In the 1950s, the Union of the Peoples of the Cameroon (UPC) formed, articulating the twin goals of immediate independence and union with the British Cameroon. Their confrontations with the mandated authority reached civil war proportions.

On January 1, 1960, the French Cameroon became independent. Ahmadou Ahidjo, a Muslim from the North of the country, and an opponent of the radical UPC, was inaugurated as its first president. The British-administered mandated territory (administered as part of Nigeria) had been divided into two zones. As a result of a plebiscite in 1961, the northern zone united with Nigeria, while the southern zone was incorporated into Cameroon. The enlarged Cameroon was reconstituted as a federal republic with two prime ministers and legislatures but a single president -- Ahidjo.

Cameroon has experienced two periods – early independence (1960-61) and a period in which it experienced oil, anocracy and instability (1993-94) – when the probability of a civil war onset by our model’s reckoning approached ten percent. Thus Cameroon has been quite susceptible to a civil

war onset, with the average probabilities for its forty year history in our dataset adding up to three percent, nearly twice the world average. Yet there has been no civil war. The task of this narrative is principally to see what factors might have worked to help Cameroon avoid the hazard it faced, especially in those two two-year periods of high susceptibility. The narrative will also be instructive in looking at the issue of diversity and grievances, two factors that are markedly present in Cameroon (though not informing our model), but without a correlative civil war.

I. Ethnic Diversity

Ethnic Group (see Map at end)	Location	Size
Western Highlanders/Grassfielders (Bamileke, Bamoun)	Northwest	38%
Coastal Tropical Forest Peoples (Bassa, Douala, etc.)	Southwest	12%
Southern Tropical Forest Peoples [Ewondo, Beti (Bulu and Fang subgroups) Maka and Pygmies/Bakas]	South	18%
Fulani (Islamic Northerners)	Sahel/N. Desert	14%
Kirdi (non-Islamic Northerners).	N. Desert/ C. Highlands	18%

Cameroon has approximately 250 different ethnic groups. With an ethnic fractionalization score of 0.89 it is much more ethnically diverse than the sub-Saharan average of 0.64. It is the fifth most ethnically diverse of the 162 countries in the FL (2003) data set. If ethno-linguistic fractionalization were included in the FL model it would support the conclusion (given the lack of civil war onsets) that high levels of ethnic-diversity *decrease* the likelihood of a civil war. Furthermore, several of the ethnic/regional cleavages are salient among the population, making it all the more interesting to explain how these differences were not exploited by ethnic/regional entrepreneurs to sustain a local insurgency.

Region, religion, ethnicity, language, and colonial heritage provide several potential political cleavages. Many of these cleavages coincide with disparities in income and have given rise to grievances. The two most politically salient social cleavages are language of colonial heritage

(Anglophone vs. Francophone) and region (North vs. South). Each of these groups is further divided in politically salient ways.

Northern Cameroon is poorer than the South. More Muslims are found in the North and more Christians in the South. Although it is generally accepted that the north is less ethnically heterogeneous than the South, northern Cameroon is also divided along ethnic and religious lines. The Fulani (or Fulbe) are the dominant group in the North despite being a minority (25%) in that region (Kofele-Kale 1986, 55). The remainder of the people in the region are the non-Muslim Kirdi.¹ Kofele-Kale writes “the fact that these groups have been under Fulbe subjugation for over a century has led some writers to suggest that these dominated groups usually go along with their Fulbe overlords in their opposition to and fear of southern groups.”² Southerners are divided by language and colonial heritage. The two Anglophone provinces (North West and South West) make up about 21% percent of the population and about 9% of the land area of Cameroon (Kofele-Kale 1986, 62).

Anglophones have had many reasons to feel resentment. Anglophone Cameroon was significantly poorer upon unification (Ndongko 1980). The federal constitution adopted upon reunification was more centralized than Anglophone leaders would have preferred, but Anglophones had little choice in the matter. In their UN plebiscite, there was no independence option. After the plebiscite, Anglophone political leaders met with Ahiéjo at Foumban in July 1961 and again at Yaoundé in August. The Anglophone delegation was at a tactical disadvantage because the people had already voted for reunification. What little autonomy Anglophones retained in 1961 was gradually eroded by Ahiéjo and by 1972 the Federation was superseded by a unitary state through a rigged plebiscite. In addition to the loss of political autonomy there were other ways in which Ahiéjo was believed to be undermining Anglophone interests.³

¹ Other counts (e.g. Fearon 2003) would suggest that the Kirdi have a smaller majority. This probably depends upon whether the Kirdi are assumed to be all non-Muslim northerners. DeLancey and DeLancey say that all non-Muslim northerners are Kirdi but that would make them quite diverse and include the Massa, Matakam, Kapsiki, Guiziga, Fali, among others (DeLancey and DeLancey 2000, 158).

² See Kofele-Kale (1986: 55) and Azarya (1976).

³ For example, the Anglophone areas were made dependent on the East Cameroonian power grid. Ahiéjo did not negotiate the exceptions to British banana tariffs that would have helped the large banana industry. Many of the changes Anglophones disliked, however, were beyond the government’s control. For example, because the administrative and commercial centers shifted to Francophone Cameroon, previously prosperous towns, such as Limbe/Victoria, declined (Kofele-Kale 1986, 65).

Although Anglophones had grievances, serious political mobilization along the linguistic cleavage did not begin until the late 1980s (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 207). Why did the Anglophones for so long tolerate the erosion of their autonomy? It appears as though the economic disparities between the two regions fostered unity rather than being a reason for conflict. Stark (1976) argues that after independence Ahidjo used state resources in order to make the union attractive to the South and North Western (i.e. Anglophone) Cameroonian elite (e.g. by increasing salaries for civil servants). Kofele-Kale notes that this process was so successful that by 1972 the idea of abolishing the Federation “met with a collective sigh of relief because at that point the federal system was no longer able to improve on the accrued psychic and material gains made by the Anglophone bourgeoisie.”⁴

Another reason for the late emergence of an Anglophone opposition is that Anglophone Cameroon is also divided by region and ethnicity. South West provincials resented the political and economic predominance of the North West.⁵ These feelings partly reflect an ethnic difference between the coastal/forest ethnic groups in South West Province and “grassfield” ethnic groups in North West Province (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 211). In the 1961 plebiscite of the two provinces that voted to join Cameroon, support for joining Cameroon was much higher in the North than in the South of former West Cameroon. In addition, support for Anglophone political parties in the 1990s was significantly weaker in the South West province (Krieger 1994, 216).

Finally, the Francophone south is ethnically divided. The Bamileke (an ethnic group originally from the western highlands bordering former British Cameroon) are believed to have a stranglehold on the national economy (Joseph, 1970, 9-10). Their economic predominance makes them a group no political leader can afford to ignore. (They also played a large role in the UPC rebellion). Bamileke migrants to the south have been a target of ethnic violence on several occasions.⁶ Since the late 1980s President Biya, in direct confrontation with the Bamilekes, has increasingly awarded political offices to his own ethnic group, the Beti, from the South West. Thus a

⁴ Kofele-Kale (1987, 137) cited in Krieger and Takougang (1998, 49).

⁵ Konings and Nyamnjoh give a detailed account of these grievances over oil revenues, land, public employment, migration south by North Westerners, and the transfer of infrastructure from the South West to the North West (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 212).

⁶ DeLancey and DeLancey note a number of violent anti-Bamileke incidents though most of them are small (DeLancey and DeLancey 2000, 30).

divided west, both regionally and ethnically, prevented a clear Anglophone point of view, or a solid Francophone majority.

Ethnic diversity appears in this case to have *prevented* political instability. Both Ahidjo and Biya have been able to neutralize major ethnic cleavages by exploiting existing cleavages outside their core area of support. Ahidjo maintained good relations with the Bamileke elite.⁷ Biya has taken advantage of both divisions within the north and among Anglophones. In 1992, he maintained a narrow parliamentary majority by forming a coalition with a small (Northern/Kirdi) political party. In the allocation of political offices he has favored Anglophone Cameroonians from the South West over those from the North West and has effectively co-opted many South Westerners (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 224-28; Krieger 1994, 618). In this way, the grievances from ethnic/regional diversity played themselves out in communal conflict rather than in a sustained rebellion against the state.

II. Terminal Mandate Period

Though the civil wars fought in Cameroon in the terminal mandate period were fought technically *in France*, they are worth analysis in this narrative in order to provide an understanding of the pressures for civil war at the moment of transition.

The UPC was the most radical organization seeking to undermine Mandate rule. It was formed in 1948 in Douala and its leaders demanded independence and reunification with Cameroon.⁸ Its popularity spread rapidly throughout the West and South West despite election defeats engineered by the French.⁹ In 1955 the French banned the UPC, accusing it of initiating riots in Douala and in other towns in the West in which twenty-six people were killed and about two hundred injured (Joseph 1977, 264-67). Violence was renewed in mid-December 1956 when factions within the UPC decided to boycott (and sabotage) the election because the reforms that

⁷ Jua argues that Ahidjo had an understanding with the Bamileke business elite. He did not interfere in their business and they did not interfere in politics. By contrast, Jua argues that Biya attempted to by-pass the Bamileke elite and displace them with his own Beti group (Jua 1993, 154).

⁸ The UPC became the Cameroon section of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (R.D.A.) and had close links with trade unions in Douala.

⁹ Joseph (1977, 339) notes that the French prevented the spread of the UPC to the south-center (Beti-Bulu) regions, a natural constituency for the nationalist movement because of their grievances over cocoa policy (see also Atangana, 1997).

led to the 1956 elections were only half-measures. The French retaliated with brutal reprisals against the UPC.

There is some disagreement about what happened between June 1955 and December 1956, when the UPC boycotted (and attempted to sabotage) the 1956 elections to the Territorial Assembly. On some accounts rebel activity was ongoing in this period. For example, LeVine (1963, 20) describes the post-May 1955 situation as a “continuing rebellion *inspired by* the UPC – initially among the Bassa in the Sanga-Maritime region, later spreading to the Bamileke areas and to other western sectors and recurring with sporadic violence in the principal towns [emphasis added].”¹⁰ However, according to Joseph the UPC did not engage in violence until December 1956. He argues against the idea that the events of May 1955 represent a UPC ‘uprising’ which was followed soon after by the initiation of a ‘guerilla-type campaign among their fellow Bassa in the Nyong-et-Kelle division’ (Joseph 1977, 316). Instead, Joseph paints a picture of the UPC as a reluctant rebel movement. He stresses the months of calm between the Douala riots of May 1955 and the resumption of violence in December 1956, the point at which factions within the UPC engaged in political violence.

The French could afford initially to be relaxed about this incipient rebellion. There was initially very little killing by the proto-insurgents. During the first phase of the rebellion (in the Bassa areas in the nine months following December 1956), in fact, much of the violence can be attributed to “anti-terrorist and counter-insurgency” measures carried out by the Administration, pro-Administration chiefs and the armed forces. Furthermore, when the UPC initiated violence in September 1957, they actively avoided attacking the French for fear of provoking them and focused instead on “local leaders of anti-UPC paramilitary brigades, and especially against the administratively appointed chiefs” (Joseph 1977, 346). Thus the attacks were not on the French themselves, but on local collaborators of the French administration.

The French felt no need to compromise with the UPC because they already had a “trump card” in the form of a political “third force” consisting of a coalition between the Muslim North and the Christian Center. This coalition already comprised a clear majority in the country. Joseph quotes Léon Pignon, Director of Political Affairs in the French Overseas Ministry,

¹⁰ DeLancey and DeLancey (2000, 6) also treat it as one continuous conflict.

“in Cameroon we could maneuver since we had 40% of the population, the conservative north, in hand – to this [support] we only had to add the center” (Joseph 1977, 327). As a result of their pleasant control over a majority in Cameroon, the French made no serious attempt to address any of the UPC’s demands. Um Nyobe, leader of the 1956-58 (Bassa) maquis in 1957, as an example, sought a political solution to the problem and demanded what, in fact, the French were to grant soon afterwards (i.e. French recognition for a right to independence).¹¹

While the French had what they upheld as a majority of Cameroonians supporting them, they allowed insurgent activity to fester. The official estimate of the total number of rebels over the whole late mandate period is 500 but this is probably wrong because evidence from one camp in the Bassa insurgency alone had about 500 soldiers (Johnson 1970). According to Atangana (1997, 102) UN reports state that 2,078 rebels surrendered in 1958 alone and 371 rebels were killed between January and October 1958.

Over the course of the late mandate and early independence period, the insurgency in Cameroon met the 1000 death threshold to qualify as a civil war. Johnson (1970) suggests that in these insurgencies rebel and government forces killed 6,000 people. Other estimates are higher (as much as 15,000) and this figure includes non-battle deaths. Further, Johnson (1970, 352 fn. 11) lists other estimates of casualties in the press until 1962. According to Johnson in the later phases counter-insurgency efforts claimed as many lives as the rebellion. There appear to be enough deaths to justify a coding of at least two civil wars taking place in Cameroon against the French.

How Many Civil Wars Against the French?

The insurgency is usually portrayed as one pitting the UPC against the French mandate authorities. However, the UPC (mostly in exile) had limited control over the insurgency in either the Bassa or the Bamileke areas, the two principal areas of insurgent activity (Johnson 1970, 354-355). The UPC supplied little of the money or the arms for the rebellion.

¹¹ Joseph (1977, 347) refers to the inflexible attitude of Andre Mbida the pre-independence Prime Minister.

In fact, the insurgency took two separate paths. In the Bassa areas, the insurgency lasted until 1958 with the murder of the UPC leader Reuben Um Nyobe. Former members of the UPC in those areas were offered amnesty and participated in subsequent elections.

The Bamileke, who were fragmented into roughly 90 chieftaincies, never developed a coordinated organization (Johnson 1970, 360).¹² Further, “[w]hile the rebellion was used as cover for personal disputes in both areas, this aspect seems to have been central to the Bamileke case. The targets of violence were only remotely related to the sources of strength of the central government; in fact, it was just the reverse. The extensive destruction of public welfare services and the limited number of Europeans attacked suggests a campaign intended simply to intimidate local residents.” (Johnson 1970, 358). Therefore, because the Bassa insurgency was more centralized it ended as soon as the mandate authorities arrested its leader and offered amnesty to its other commanders.

It was at the point of Bassa accommodation that the UPC split into a legal and illegal faction. The “illegals” took the struggle against the French to the Bamileke areas (Atangana 1997, 120). The second, and bloodier, phase of the insurgency, as conventionally recounted, took place in the Bamileke areas from around 1956 to 1971 and was only suppressed with French assistance. The French increased their military presence in December 1957, and adopted extremely brutal measures to suppress the rebellion (Joseph 1977, 346).

Treating the UPC rebellion as a single coordinated event which moved from the Bassa areas to the Bamileke areas, however, is probably an error reproduced in the available historiography.¹³ This impression was possibly encouraged by the existence of a vocal UPC in exile. The historical data support an alternative view, viz., that there were two separate insurrections each sustained by local politics.

¹² Johnson argues that the UPC military wing was able to use “moribund secret societies” and loyalty to Um Nyobe to give the Bassa an organizational coherence. It is not clear that this “coherence” can really be attributed to traditional political organizations. In comparing the two groups Joseph writes, “While the Bamileke are a people with individualist traits, despite their highly organized social structure, the Bassa are individualistic with a segmentary and more diffused social structure.” He notes that the Bassa resisted colonial rule by dispersing their population (Joseph 1977, 13).

¹³ Joseph (1977), who is in general the best source on the UPC, treats it as one entity with a distinctive ideology. He views the fact that only the Bamileke participated in the rebellion after 1958 as evidence of the fact that the movement had whittled down to its ethnic core. Our account is heavily influenced by evidence in Johnson 1970.

Local politics, and not a tactical shift by the UPC in a coordinated rebellion, better explains the spread of the rebellion to Bamileke areas. Johnson (1970, 356) explains “the grievances of a young deposed Bamileke chief [Kamdem-Ninyim Pierre] provided the exiled leaders of the UPC with their first opportunity to stir up widespread violence in the Bamileke region.” Kamdem-Ninyim was deposed as Chief of Baham in 1956 (a position he had inherited in 1954) because of his involvement with the UPC. In response Kamdem-Ninyim formed a military organization (*Courant d’Action Nationale*, or CAN). The CAN initiated the first Bamileke *maquis* and lived on after Kamdem-Ninyim’s arrest in 1956 under Paul Momo, one of Kamdem-Ninyim’s lieutenants, and was organizationally separate from the UPC in exile, which was represented by the *Armée de Liberation Nationale du Kamerun* (ALNK) (Johnson 1970, 357-58). Kamdem-Ninyim was later co-opted by the government and made Minister of Health, all the while organizing guerilla activity in the Bamileke areas (Johnson 1970, 358). The Bamileke were further divided because powerful Bamileke chiefs,¹⁴ such as Mathias Djoumessi, distanced themselves from the UPC as early as 1951 because of its “anti-traditional and anti-chief” orientation (Johnson 1970, 360; Joseph 1977, 175).¹⁵

We therefore see the French government having faced two overlapping insurgencies in its Cameroon mandate: the Bassa onset of 1956 and the Bamileke onset of 1958.

III. On Cameroonian Independence

Upon independence, with the insurgency raging, Ahidjo asked for more French assistance. The French general in charge of this new effort had “five overseas battalions, T-26 fighter-bombers and tanks” at his disposal (Atangana 1997, 103). The 1960 campaign resulted in the deaths of 3,000 rebels and 30 French soldiers. This may be an underestimate of the total number of victims as many died in the forest of disease and exhaustion.¹⁶ It

¹⁴ These chiefs were amongst the earliest Cameroonians to oppose the French, particularly over restrictions on the cultivation of coffee by Cameroonians (Atangana 1997, 97 and Mbapndah 1994, 57-58).

¹⁵ Djoumessi had a large personal following and founded his own political organization and political grouping in the National Assembly, called the *Paysans Indépendants*.

¹⁶ Johnson (1970, 352) suggests that the total number of people killed in the fighting between government and rebel forces or by accident is close to 6000 from 1955 to 1962.

raises the question as to whether this was a war of early independence *in Cameroon*.

If it were a civil war in Cameroon, it would be that of the Bamileke rebellion, since the Bassa leadership had been co-opted peacefully by Ahidjo. But there is little agreement as to the point when the war ended, and it is therefore difficult to assess whether this civil war spilled over into a war against independent Cameroon. Bayart (1973) dates the end of the civil war from 1955 to 1964. LeVine (1971, 120-22, 182) dates the end of the domestic insurgency at 1962. DeLancey and DeLancey (2000) argue that the insurgency ended in 1971 when the prominent UPC figures were arrested and executed (p. 269, 169). However, the leader whose arrest they claim ended the rebellion (Ernest Ouandié) was only rumored to have been conducting an insurgency in 1968 (Johnson 1970, 361). Bayart (1979, 90) writes that by 1961 although the government was not always capable of maintaining order, the main Bamileke rebel group was no longer capable of mounting a serious offensive, yet he still dates the end of the war to 1964.

However dated, it seems clear that at some point between 1961 and 1971 the insurgency degenerated into random acts of banditry but when this happened is not clear. Joseph (1977, 349) states “Today, the U.P.C. is still present in the territory in the form of occasional attacks by armed gangs, often viewed as mere bandits.” LeVine (1971, 128-129) suggests that there were two types of insurgents in this period, ordinary criminals who took advantage of the insecurity to steal and genuine political groups led by exiles. A reasonable date for the end of the civil war in Cameroon is therefore closer to 1961 than 1971. Moreover, after independence, Ahidjo had the task of cleaning up the remnants of a war that was fought against the French; he did not face a new outbreak of hostilities that would count as a new civil war. We can thus conclude here that while the French faced two civil wars in Cameroon, the new Cameroonian state did not face a civil war onset at the point of independence.

How did the insurgency influence the likelihood of future civil wars?

It is likely that the UPC rebellion and the way in which it was suppressed reduced the likelihood that Cameroon would have another insurgency in two ways. First, it created a strong military completely loyal to Ahidjo (Joseph 1978, 36). The French trained the Cameroonian army and helped to construct the *Service des Etudes et de la Documentation* (SEDOC)

which, according to Krieger and Takougang (1998, 39) was “one of the most effective intelligence services in sub-Saharan Africa.” Second, the rebellion allowed Ahidjo to assume Emergency powers in 1959 and he used these powers to postpone elections due in 1960. This move allowed him to draft the constitution of independent Cameroon and to create an extremely powerful presidency and electoral rules designed to ensure the dominance of his Union Camerounaise (UC). These measures led to the defection of several opposition party members and Ahidjo’s UC was effectively the only political party in East Cameroon well before Cameroon officially became a single-party state in 1966. Leaders of political parties in West Cameroon soon realized that cooperation with Ahidjo was their only option. The fact then that France was able to install its ally in power at the final stages of an anti-mandate civil war, gave the new president resources and the political space to develop a strong state.

Ahidjo’s Skill

An important theme in the country literature for why Cameroon was so stable is the distinctive personal style of Ahidjo (Bayart 1976). In contrast to Biya, Ahidjo managed tensions within Cameroon by recycling elites and by maintaining good relations with a variety of ethnic groups (e.g. van de Walle 2001; Kofele-Kale 1986; Krieger and Takougang 1998 etc.). In addition, he is credited with reducing the salience of ethnicity in Cameroonian politics by introducing a regime ideology intolerant of the discussion of ethnicity. For example, he banned all ethnic associations in 1967. Bayart (1973, 160) refers to his approach to ethnic politics as “Jacobin”, but notes that the “ethic of unity” only strengthened the most favored groups.

IV. The Biya/Ahidjo Transition and Attempted Coup

In 1982 Ahidjo announced his retirement from office, and he named his successor. In our model, there was no change in regime, and therefore not a heightened probability for a civil war. However, as would be expected with instability, in the wake of this leadership change, there should have been a high possibility for a civil war onset. And despite our model’s law assignation of the probability for a civil war in 1982 (3.2 percent), there indeed was a danger.

Ahidjo’s retirement was a move nearly without precedent in sub-Saharan Africa. One rumor is that his French doctors told him that he was

dying. Ahidjo pressed for the appointment of Paul Biya, who was widely regarded as weak and inexperienced, as his successor. Ahidjo remained the head of the governing party. The period from November 1982 and July 1984 is one of realignments and apparent state weakness. Biya initially attempted to maintain Ahidjo's ethno-regional coalition. Recognizing the constraints of the Ahidjo coalition, Biya toured his home region (Center South) explaining to the people that they should not expect too much from him (Bayart 1993, 57-58).

A Cabinet reshuffle, however, designed to demonstrate Biya's independence from Ahidjo, and conflicts between Ahidjo and Biya over the official status of the governing party, soon soured relations between the two men. In February 1984 Biya tried two of Ahidjo's close aides (both northern military men) for plotting a coup in August 1983.¹⁷ These events, and an attempt to restructure the Republican Guard, induced a coup attempt in April 1984 by members of the Republican Guard, the Gendarmerie, and the police. The fighting was limited to Yaoundé and the official figures list seventy deaths. Gen. Pierre Semengue, a Beti and a close Biya ally and the Army chief of staff, led forces loyal to Biya.

The attempted coup drastically changed the nature of the Biya regime. It was followed by a major cabinet reshuffle and the replacement of parastatal heads. Although many of these changes benefited Biya's own ethnic group, he was careful to retain a few northerners not closely associated with Ahidjo (LeVine 1986; Krieger and Takougang, 1998). He also created new administrative units in order to separate non-Muslim northerners from Ahidjo's Fulbe power-base (Krieger and Takougang 1998, 72). The coup attempt also led Biya to reverse his generally pro-reform stance. Van de Walle (1994, 144) writes, "[Biya's] precarious position during and after his power struggle with Ahidjo led Biya to expand the use of state resources for political purposes – to please the army, to mollify the north (Ahidjo's base of support), and to meet the heightened expectations of his fellow southerners.

In cases of weak states, the politics of succession (even without a change in regime, which we would code as instability) is apparently far more dangerous than our model suggests, since any succession leaves a rump group of family and retainers who remain without resources or power. They

¹⁷ Ahidjo was tried *in absentia* because he had left the country a month before the attempted coup.

can be greatly disruptive of new leadership. This point is compounded by the fact that in this unstable period, oil revenue began changing the political climate in Cameroon.

V. The 1990s: Oil, Instability and Anocracy

The second two-year stretch of heightened probability for a civil war onset in independent Cameroon is 1993-94, when oil, instability and anocracy all get positive values. Yet again, there was no civil war, and this requires some explanation.

Oil

Cameroon's odds of experiencing a civil war onset doubled when Cameroon passes the threshold of having at least one-third of export revenue from fossil fuels (FL, 2003: 85).¹⁸ Even though no civil war occurred in this period it is worthwhile examining whether oil revenues changed Cameroonian politics a way that could have led to one.

There are three ways in which oil wealth is supposed to change political systems. First, oil states have "hollow" institutions because elites do not have to tax citizens. Second, oil revenues could help autocrats consolidate their political power. Finally, because oil revenues can help leaders consolidate power, they could exacerbate commitment problems associated with reaching deals with the peoples sitting on the oil rich lands.

In Cameroon, oil revenues appear to have both consolidated individual politicians in power and, to a lesser extent, hollowed out state institutions. Under Ahidjo and during the early years of Biya's rule the size of revenues from the sale of oil was a "state secret."¹⁹ Oil revenue was reckoned in an extra-budgetary account (*compte hors budget-CHB*) and all money not spent was deposited outside the Franc Zone. Funds in the CHB were used to supplement the official budget of Cameroon but the president had complete discretion over how they were to be used (DeLancey, 1989, 141). Further, the government made no public statement on how funds from the CHB were used until 1983 (Jua 1993). Van de Walle (1994, 141) notes that Biya is believed still to have a secret oil account.

¹⁸ The relevant years are 1981-85, 1988, 1990-1994,

¹⁹ Jua suggests that the IMF placed pressure on Cameroon to include oil revenues in the budget (Jua 1993, 141).

While total presidential discretion over oil spending might well have worked to hollow out state institutions, Cameroon could be an exception to “political Dutch Disease.” Compared to Nigeria, oil revenues in Cameroon are small and supply is known to be limited. Analysts predicted in the 1970s that Cameroonian production would peak in 1985/6 (Jua, 1993: 192). However, the fact that oil revenues were known to be temporary could only dampen their destabilizing effect if we argue that leaders had very long time horizons. This claim has been made of Ahidjo, whose major justification for the restrictions on production was the wish to avoid a “boom mentality.”²⁰

The Cameroonian case suggests that, at least in the short term, whether or not oil revenues should increase a country’s risk of entering in to a civil war depends upon how well established the regime is. Oil revenues may help already well-established leaders increase their stranglehold on power, but it could also destabilize leaders with already credible rivals.²¹ An observable implication of this is to create an interaction term of instability and new oil revenues (perhaps the two years before through the two years after “oil” gets its first positive value, a country should be given a positive value for a new variable called “new oil”). If this new variable in interaction with instability provides added explanatory value beyond “instability” and “oil”, we would have added confidence in this conjecture.²²

The Location of the Oil

The likelihood that natural resources will cause a civil war may depend upon where they are located. In general, Cameroonian oil is not the kind of natural resource that would be useful to rebels. Much of it is offshore and is by necessity produced in partnership with foreign firms. The main oil and gas region is offshore on the Rio del Rey basin (in the Niger Delta, east

²⁰ Ahidjo is quoted in by Jua (1993) Other authors speak favorably of the Ahidjo regime’s good stewardship of the oil revenues (Benjamin and Devaranjan, 1986; DeLancey, 1989). Jua believes that the secrecy was a scam.

²¹ The case of Congo-Brazzaville provides evidence for this theory. In this case oil revenues were a cause of the war because three regional blocks fought to control Brazzaville after 1992 but once Denis Sassou Nguesso captured the capital in 1999 he was able to use the country’s oil wealth to secure peace by bribing rival leaders with public jobs (Englebert and Ron, 2002).

²² “New oil” would imply not only a period of possibility for secession of the people who “sit” on the reserves, but also a period *before* the state could be reasonably hollowed out by its new found source of revenue.

of Nigeria).²³ Thus, unlike Nigeria, no group is “sitting” on this oil as were the Igbos and then the Ogonis. Unless a coherent group can claim ownership of the land below, its ability to mobilize for autonomy (and claim for sole rights to oil rents) is weakened.

Democratization: Instability and Anocracy

The political transition to multiparty elections in 1992 further increased Cameroon’s odds of experiencing a civil war through two variables other than oil. First, it is coded as an “anocracy” from 1993 to 1999. Second, because of changes in the Polity score from 1993 to 1995, it is coded as “unstable.” The period before and during the multiparty elections of 1992 was violent, particularly in the Anglophone areas and in the North. This section examines first the role of the political opposition and asks why a military option was not considered. Second, it examines the military itself and tries to determine why there has been no military coup with the potential to spill over into an urban war.

The Political Opposition

Pro-democracy agitation began with attempts to create new parties in 1990. The most prominent of these was the Social Democratic Front (SDF) created by John Fru Ndi, an Anglophone, in 1990. The Biya government contributed to the prominence of the SDF by violently suppressing a large rally held in Bamenda in May 1990. From 1990 to 1991 several new opposition parties were created and the opposition called for a National Conference. In response to Biya’s refusal to call a conference in July 1991, rallies and ghost town (“villes mortes”) protests in the major cities of the West and the South resulted in clashes between security forces and protesters.

It is not clear how much control the Biya government had over events in this period. Krieger and Takougang argue that after June 1991, “facing pockets of insurrection, the state for weeks after June 27 [1991] shut down all but the most basic security responses throughout most of the four

²³ See Ngu (1988). In addition, there are reserves in both on offshore and onshore in the Douala/Kribi-Campo basin (southern Cameroon) and in the Logone Birni Basin in the north of the country near Chad. In addition, the International Court of Justice ruled in October 2002 that Cameroon has sovereignty over the oil-rich Bakassi peninsula. However, the most significant oil reserves are located offshore, in an area awarded to Nigeria (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2002). However, Jua (1993) argues that oil deposits in Cameroon are under-explored because the government has not given oil companies very good terms.

province heartland of the strike” (Krieger and Takougang 1998, 131). In October 1991, Biya agreed to call a National Conference and to hold multiparty elections. He reached an agreement with opposition parties on constitutional reforms in November (the Yaoundé Declaration). However, the SDF boycotted the 1992 election because it was clear that Biya planned to manipulate the outcome.

Since the 1992 elections, which Biya won narrowly despite corruption and opposition fragmentation,²⁴ he has managed to consolidate his position in Cameroon through two other elections (1997 and 2002). His political dominance is so pronounced that, according to Takougang (2003), the governing party was surprised and embarrassed by its comprehensive victory in 2002. To make the election look less rigged, party cadres conceded to several run-off elections (Takougang 2003, 424-25). Takougang argues that Biya has been able to use the power of incumbency to skew the system in his favor and paints a picture of an ethnically fragmented political opposition desperate to be bought off.²⁵

Why has Cameroon’s political opposition, with no chance of winning an election, remained peaceful? It does not appear as though there was ever a military option for Cameroonian political parties. The pro-democracy political violence never escalated into anything more, even though the regime demonstrated that it did not have the capacity to control parts of North West province. It also appears as though the Cameroonian security forces were not united behind the regime in the suppression of pro-democracy movements. Krieger and Takougang note that around Bamenda (the capital of North West province) policemen of local origins warned civilians against sweeps by “foreign” gendarmes and note one instance in which local and national security forces exchanged gunfire (Krieger and Takougang 1998, fn. 30 p. 155).

One possibility in these troubled times was a western secession (see Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997). There are two probable reasons for this not being seriously organized. First, the South Westerners remain suspicious of their fellow Anglophones. Second, because the SDF (the main Anglophone party) had support outside the Anglophone region in neighboring West and

²⁴ Opposition parties are divided along ethno-regional lines.

²⁵ He makes the point that the opposition exists to collaborate with the regime several times. Biya also introduced public financing for opposition parties [Find date for this].

Littoral provinces, it has tried to cast itself as a national party (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, p. 216), and has avoided secessionist threats.²⁶

The pro-democracy violence nonetheless illustrates that Cameroon has a supply of “young males” who can be recruited to violent ends, and that youth unemployment is a major problem. Much of the violent pro-democracy protest of 1991 was conducted by unemployed youth and it is difficult to separate pro-democracy violence from gang violence, particularly because protests coincided with a period of armed robberies and other crimes. It is difficult to know where these groups got their arms (whether from the Biya government or from the SDF).²⁷ In another interpretation neither the government nor the SDF had any control over the violence (Krieger and Takougang 1998, 127). Guns could have been obtained quite cheaply on the open market. During this period wars in neighboring countries increased the number of guns in Cameroon leading to large increases in the number of armed robberies and in vigilante groups to deal with the disorder.²⁸ Here crime appears to be a substitute for insurgency under conditions of high urbanization, low mountains, a strong army, and coordination problems faced by regional elites.²⁹

A Loyal Military

In general, the military appears to be pro-Biya. Several generals made anti-reform statements in 1991 and military planes and personnel assist in the President’s political campaigns.³⁰ Biya retired Ahidjo’s presidential guard and changed patterns of military recruitment. Patterns of new recruitment into the military remain heavily skewed in favor of the regime’s core areas in the Center and South (Krieger and Takougang 1998, 227).³¹ However, the military does not appear to be completely united behind Biya and military officers have spoken out against corruption and military killings

²⁶ Not clear whether this can be considered “ethnic” voting. Kofele-Kale discusses “ethnic transvestites” Anglophones who identified with Francophone ethnic groups for political advantage. These people were either the children of migrants from Francophone to Anglophone areas or members of ethnic groups that straddled the border (Kofele-Kale 1986, 79).

²⁷ Krieger and Takougang (1998, 234) also refer to one case in which pro-democracy violence was an excuse to settle old scores.

²⁸ Jane’s Defense refers to government efforts in recent years to crack down on illegal guns; but we have found no other references to it.

²⁹ See the random narrative on Nigeria for a fuller discussion of the trade off on crime and insurgency

³⁰ Musa, Tansa. Cameroon – Politics: Presidential Campaign is One-Man Show. 10/8/97. IPS-Inter Press Service/Global Information Network.

³¹ For example, after the 1992 election Biya removed 100 non-Beti troops from his elite security corps (Krieger and Takougang 1998, fn. 73 p. 158).

of civilians in Anglophone areas (May 1990) and in the North (1991) as well as against corruption.³²

It seems as though Biya works hard in order to keep the security forces on his side. Since 1992 the defense budget has doubled, and probably for political reasons.³³ An alternative explanation for this military expansion is a boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. However, the Cameroonian army is not really an effective deterrent against Nigeria and it continues to depend upon French “technical assistance.” Further, Krieger and Takougang note that conflict with Nigeria and disputes near Lake Chad “keep up a level of military preparedness which France materially assists, so that the armed forces are paid, given raises at sensitive junctures, adequately equipped in the strategic locales, and active enough to be satisfied” (Krieger and Takougang 1998, 227).

In the North during this period, we would expect to see violence instigated by men who had benefited from the Ahidjo regime. Information is scarce. All we can find here are rumors of a possible coup by Captain Guerandi Mbara who was involved in the 1984 attempted coup.³⁴ However, one of the sources stresses that these rumors were primarily in government newspapers.³⁵ It appears likely that if something happens to Biya, the stability that was maintained in Cameroon’s history might not be sustained.

Outside Support to the Regime: The French

A final factor that helps explain the lack of an insurgency in both two-year periods of heightened susceptibility is that of external support. The French stabilized both Ahidjo’s and Biya’s rule. Ahidjo owed his position as the country’s first leader to the French who engineered the removal of his predecessor Prime Minister Andre Mdiba.³⁶ The French preferred Ahidjo because he was a northerner and because they believed that he could be easily manipulated. They supplied the troops and the training that allowed him to crush the UPC rebellion and suppress dissent throughout his entire tenure. The consensus view is that although relations between Ahidjo and the French were close, they were never as openly chummy as French

³² Krieger and Takougang (1998, 227) and “Military” Political Risk Services (The PRS Group) 1997.

³³ In 2002 opposition politicians complained that Biya was afraid to retire generals from the payroll.

³⁴ Jane’s Defense “Internal Affairs”

³⁵ IRIN-WA Special Briefing on Cameroonian Elections 10 October 1997

³⁶ However, Mdiba had made himself unpopular by trying to delay independence and refusing to negotiate with the UPC insurgents.

relations with Omar Bongo (in Gabon) or Felix Houphouët-Boigny (in Ivory Coast). French diplomats tried, and failed, to mediate conflict between Biya and Ahidjo during the transition period. Despite statements made by French officials in favor of political liberalization, Takougang (2003) argues that France tacitly supported the Biya government by providing financial support for the regime shortly after the “ghost town” period, and by lending their prestige to the flawed elections of 1992. The French are also rumored to have lobbied the IMF allowing Biya to get a new \$39 million dollar loan at the end of 1991.³⁷ The French also provide military assistance to Cameroon.

Neo-colonial protection therefore played a role not only in protecting the regime from a civil war onset at the point of transition and thereby helping the successor regime to have a stronger state than would be expected from its GDP, but has continued to play a role forty years after independence, now more to protect oil sources than incumbents. However, the effect is the same: third party enforcement has been a valuable asset in staving off civil war rebellion. It is a factor that recurs, yet is absent from our quantitative dataset.

VI. Conclusions

This narrative raises six issues that speak to our data and our theory of insurgency. First, although this narrative was not on France, we have examined the insurgency in the Cameroons against the French mandate in the 1950s, and have determined that it is best coded as two separate insurgencies. And although one of these insurgencies continued in some form during the independence years, close examination leads us to uphold our coding of Cameroon, in our saying that there was no new civil war at independence.

Second, this narrative focuses on deeply felt regional and ethnic grievances in modern Cameroonian history. Yet there has been no civil war. Cases like this one are excellent reminders that the link between ethnicity and ethnic grievances to civil war onsets is subject to a bias of selection.

Third, this narrative points to the trade off between crime and insurgency. When in general conditions such as country poverty and political instability favor insurgency but ecological conditions (lack of

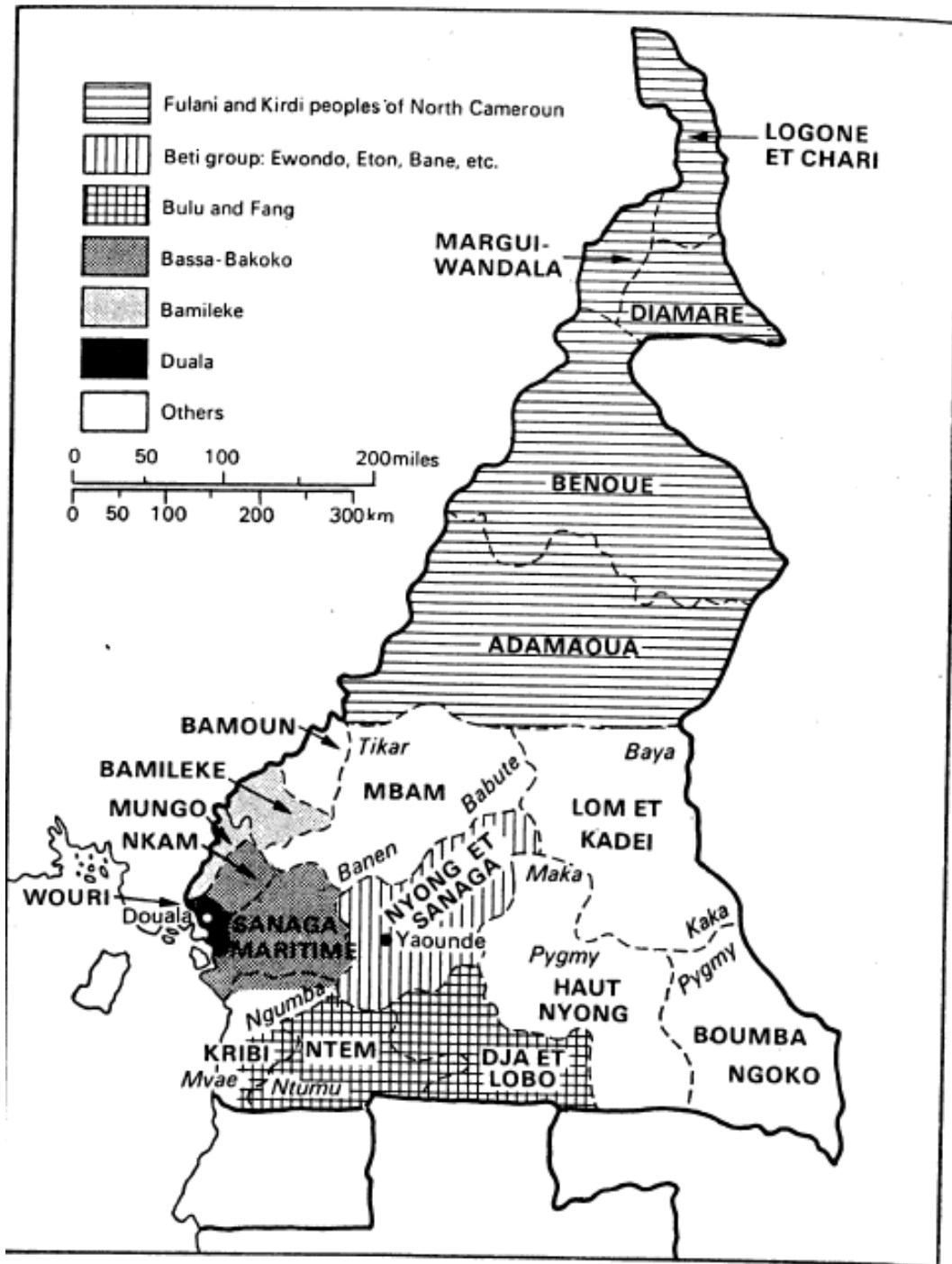
³⁷ Van de Walle (1994, 47) says that this new IMF loan paved the way for a much larger loan from France.

mountains, a strong army relative to GDP) prevent its realization, potential insurgents will substitute a life of crime for one of insurgency.

Fourth, under conditions of state weakness, all political transitions are fraught with danger. To be sure, our model is not weakened in this case. The transition from Ahidjo to Biya did not yield political instability in our coding, and no civil war occurred. The violence perpetrated by Ahidjo's allies, having been taken off the gravy train, was successfully stemmed by Biya. In this sense the case shows why a mere transition isn't enough to make a regime more vulnerable to insurgency. Yet this transition brought Cameroon close enough to a bloody counter-coup that could easily have consumed one thousand lives.

Fifth, the narrative material on Cameroonian oil discoveries suggests that the link between oil and state weakness is not the only mechanism linking oil wealth to civil war. In the Cameroonian case, oil wealth gave leaders resources to sustain patron client ties and thereby to avoid civil war. We suggest therefore that if oil comes into play politically when the country is stable, it will likely have a negative affect on civil war onset; but if oil comes into play politically when the country is weak (or demonstrably unstable), it will more likely play a role of exacerbating conflict and yielding violence.

Finally, this narrative highlights the importance of patron states for avoiding civil war onsets in post-colonial states, especially in the period of transition from colonial rule. Our theory says that new states have a problem in credibly committing to their own minorities their good intentions, giving the minorities an incentive to rebel early, before the state strengthens. The Cameroonian case (as well as the other African countries we have looked at) shows that the commitment to the regime to which power is transferred by a relatively powerful metropole easily trumps any move by a minority for immediate military action in favor of secession. In sum, third party impact is crucial; but this impact needs better to be specified (so that we know if there is a credible commitment by the metropole to a regime independent of whether it acted to support that regime) before it can be included in our high-n model.



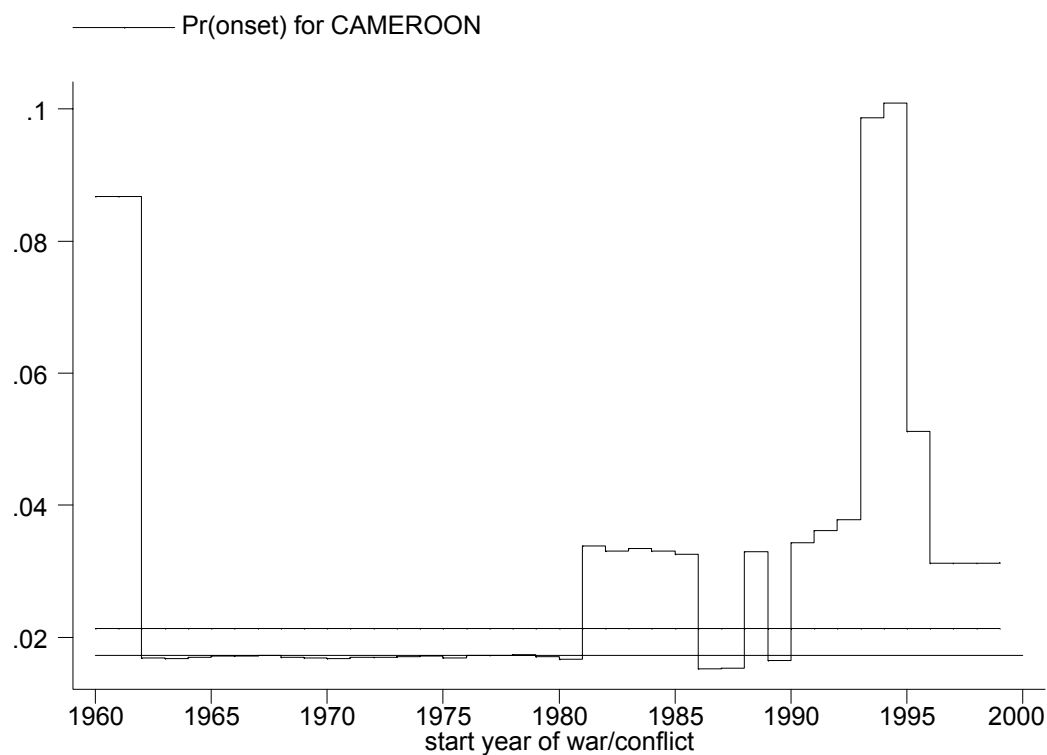
MAP II. Administrative Divisions and Major Ethnic Groups

(Joseph, 1977)

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cname	year	pr	gdp~1	pop	mtn~t	Oil	ins~b	anocl
CAMEROON	1960	.0854187	.641	5332	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1961	.0854187	.641	5427	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1962	.0165995	.66	5524	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1963	.0164792	.698	5623	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1964	.0166704	.677	5723	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1965	.0168578	.657	5825	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1966	.0168532	.673	5955	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1967	.0169387	.676	6088	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1968	.0166972	.74	6225	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1969	.0165597	.785	6364	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1970	.0165381	.808	6506	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1971	.0166592	.804	6664	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1972	.0167313	.811	6836	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1973	.0168266	.815	7022	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1974	.0168694	.83	7223	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1975	.0166143	.902	7439	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1976	.0169794	.859	7671	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1977	.0169648	.888	7921	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1978	.0170811	.894	8183	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1979	.0168105	.972	8445	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1980	.0164239	1.072	8701	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1981	.0324369	1.194	8954	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1982	.0316782	1.294	9205	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1983	.0320448	1.281	9457	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1984	.0316663	1.342	9710	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1985	.031287	1.403	9969	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1986	.0150547	1.487	10244	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1987	.0151091	1.499	10536	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1988	.0316218	1.439	10846	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1989	.0161965	1.33	11175	17.7	0	0	0
CAMEROON	1990	.0329211	1.361	11524	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1991	.0346266	1.226	11881	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1992	.0361994	1.11	12242	17.7	1	0	0
CAMEROON	1993	.095232	1.029	12471.42	17.7	1	1	1
CAMEROON	1994	.0973722	.969	12822.14	17.7	1	1	1

CAMEROON	1995	.050638	.919	13182	17.7	0	1	1
CAMEROON	1996	.0308203	.923	13553.17	17.7	0	0	1
CAMEROON	1997	.0308569	.943	13936.05	17.7	0	0	1
CAMEROON	1998	.0308749	.965	14331.04	17.7	0	0	1
CAMEROON	1999	.0309033	.986	.	17.7	0	0	1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
pr	40	.0299133	.0223194	.0150547	.0973722
gdpenl	40	.980075	.2637213	.641	1.499
pop	39	8890.662	2757.337	5332	14331.04
mtnest	40	17.7	0	17.7	17.7
Oil	40	.275	.4522026	0	1

instab	40	.075	.2667468	0	1
anocl	40	.175	.3848076	0	1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
pr	1550	.0187746	.0196424	.0006432	.2190491
gdpenl	1561	1.095448	.9549041	.196	7.777
pop	1550	10008.91	14530.35	270	121257.3
mtnest	1593	12.75548	22.33017	0	82.20001
Oil	1593	.0803515	.271922	0	1

instab	1587	.1770636	.3818429	0	1
anocl	1582	.2237674	.4168998	0	1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
pr	6327	.0167842	.0232433	3.19e-10	.5059608
gdpenl	6373	3.651117	4.536645	.048	66.735
pop	6433	31786.92	102560.8	222	1238599
mtnest	6610	18.08833	20.96648	0	94.3
Oil	6610	.1295008	.3357787	0	1

instab	6596	.1464524	.353586	0	1
anocl	6541	.2256536	.418044	0	1