

Review Article

Serving the State in the New Deal Era in Cameroon: A Diagnosis of the Sojourn of State functionaries

Ngam Confidence Chia^{1*}

¹Political/Diplomatic Historian, Vice Dean of Admissions and Records, Faculty of Law and Political Science, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

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Abstract: Upon assuming office as the second head of state (President) of the Cameroon State, Paul Biya and his political associates launched an all-encompassing program known as the New Deal which was intended to guide the conduct of politics and public offices' morale from the 1980s. This program nursed elastic expectations and hopes of a New Dawn of abounding opportunities for almost all Cameroonians especially the Civil servants, state agents, and others within the state payroll. Aside from the graphic display of moral decency that was entrenched in the New Deals' concept of Rigour and Moralization, was also associated with the fact that all state functionaries in Cameroon were already addicted to a culture of gradual but continuous improvement of their welfare under Ahidjos Administration. The buoyancy of the Cameroon economy at the inception of the New Deal programme and the glaring sophistications plus avenues for growth and welfare embedded in another concept known as the 'Social Justice' combined to justify and scale up anxieties of a birth of an era of good fortunes among rural and urban folks. Contrary to expectations and calculus of these yearning folks, the fate of civil servants in the New Deal Era as from the late 1990s turned out to be some sort of a full travesty rich in embarrassments and graphic disappointments. It became astonishing that most shades of opinions in Cameroon found both their existing and expected glory fading into the realms of sterile hypothesis as the lot of state functionaries especially at the level of their pay packages and other emoluments sank continuously to unimaginable and unbearable depth. The continuous fading fortunes of the Civil servants and the civil service owed its origin to the general economic malaise that became the new normal of the International system following a drastic drop of cash crop and oil prices in the world markets but this became a remote justification to the Cameroon State functionaries who had never anticipated such misfortune. It was difficult for these classes of individuals both to understand and cope not only with stagnating salaries but most astonishingly, with a doubled downsize of their pay package and a painful devaluation of the CFA in the first half on the 1990s. As if this was not enough, the SAP policies imposed by the IMF brought about the privatization of most parastatals, with some forced to completely closed down and others to cut down its labour size by more down half. Coping with social, political and economic responsibilities plus serving the state in such a new context became gravely exacting as it affected the morale, tempo and quality of services rendered by civil servants in public offices as well as the ego of the state to assume its functions in supervision with authority. This paper has combed evidence from primary and secondary sources and compliments them with living witnesses accounts to provide a transcript of the ordeal and comportment of state functionaries in their various services during this sustained hard times. It offers that this surprising downturn of events and drop in welfare fortunes introduced an element of lack of motivation, a dwindling sense of initiative, and the willingness to sacrifice for the state by most Cameroonians. It argues further that this went further to engineer corruption, tribalism, nepotism, and regionalism which worked tersely against national

Unity, patriotism, and security of the Cameroon state thereby making the whole concept of the New Deal, especially the twin concept of Rigour and Moralization and Social Justice empty slogans. This transcript provides a possible explanation of the failure of the New Deal along with how citizens' dangling welfare plus state intransigence worked together to destroy the concept of wellbeing and living together in Cameroon. It is therefore a study of shifting paradigms of the economy and governance in Cameroon.

Keywords: Serving, state, Cameroon, New Deal Era, Rigour, Moralization.

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INTRODUCTION

Scholarship about individual and collective stewardship to the Cameroon state has often glossed over the particularisms that was the fate of the Cameroon state servants in the 1980s and 90s which this paper has opted to call it the early New Deal era. This nonchalance often casts off/away worthy contributions that could have succinctly transcribed the conduct of state Policies by those who served the state in higher offices like former Governor Aboeumachoi and those he ordered or mentored to render service to the State. The scant attention on such fortunes also removes or shifts asides worthy sign posts that could explain in details why the Cameroon state became so weak in the late 1980s and 1990s as well as, why corruption scaled sordid so much that the country was classified by transparent International in 1998 and 99 as the most corrupt country on earth. This is the mission of this study. By summoning and collecting evidence from primary and secondary sources and complementing them with eyewitnesses or participant accounts, the article has settled on this somewhat neglected aspect of the Cameroon historiography to produce a portrait of the passions (pride and prejudices) encountered by state servants in their line of duty in the early half of the new deal era.

From a thorough scrutiny of the data combed from the above stated sources, we argue that the New Deal package offered wholesale by Biya as a New form of government failed to keep its promise for shared reasons. We take our argument further to posit that, the failure of the State in its ambitioned programme to push through the intended ideals inaugurated a new social, political and economic matrix wherein; both the state agents and agencies got exceedingly buried in obscurantist passions replete with the general lack of genuine zeal to honour their engagements as enshrined in the Social Contract philosophy. The consequence of this twist was an outgrowth of a sort of governing power entropy which rendered the system incapable to ensure the achievement of the rigour and moralization carried in the doctrinaire of the New Deal known as communal Liberalism.

The paper provides a scientific positioning which both compliments and repositions earlier debates

on the Cameroon state postures, decay and survival during the New Deal Era developed elsewhere by J. Takougang, M. Krieger, J. FBayart, A. Mbembe, F. B. Nyamjoh, N. Jua and P. Konnings to name but a sorted few. It is in all perspective a contribution to the fortunes of civil servants and state agents as they grapple with the state difficulties of actualizing the New Deal theory on the ground.

The Issues Background/Context

A good grasp of the arguments raised, sustained or upheld by this article can only be attained if the issues are clearly defined and placed in their context or background. To do this, state functionaries which are the overriding subject of this paper needs to be situated in its proper context and background. State functionaries in the Cameroon context represent the assembly of those working and being paid directly from state treasury or its related financial flows. It takes into account civil servants in their different grades and ranks as well as those serving the different decentralized arms of the Cameroon state popularly referred to as state agents.¹

At independence in the early sixties, the Cameroon state adopted a Republican system of governance likened to their triple colonial past of German, French and British.²This kind of governance

¹Bayie, Kamanda (1999) Cameroon : 'The Retrenched Workers of the Civil Service and Parastatals. Assessing the Needs for the Reforms'' in Bulletin de l'APAD *Itinéraires de "déflatés" au Cameroun*, p.1.

² The Germans were the first to win the colonial race by annexing the territory following the signing of the Germano-Douala Treaty on the 12th of July 1884. From 1884 till 1916 when the Germans were defeated in Cameroon during the first World War the territory was German though the debate whether it was a German protectorate or a colony still rages on. In anycase the Germans left lasting imprints in the dimension of administration that were borrowed and remodelled by the French and British Administration in their Mandate assignments under the auspices of the League of Nations that commenced in 1922. By Independence in 1960-1 such prime colonial orientation formed the basis of the civil service though there were slide differences in what came to known as West and East Cameroon.

necessitated the creation of Institutions whose operation required the services of skilled and “on the job” trained personnel. To this should be added the fact that these institutions had offices that were categorized according to the hierarchy of state needs better elucidated by Maslow which the governing authorities were supposed to distinguish some workers through appointments to man them. Whether within the centralized or decentralized structures of the state, functionaries’ had the prime duty of serving the state with everything that was required to keep it alive. As it was the currency of the time, the state was designed and projected through its various Institutions to stand supreme on any other interest.

So in serving the state each individual was supposed to avoid all deeds or practices that were to put the state policies and its survival in time and place into any form of jeopardy.³ Enlistment/recruitment⁴ into the different echelons of the Cameroon civil service from Independence followed different sorts of logic each of them consonant not only to the need of the time but also to the kind of service to be offered. It was in this same logic that remunerations (salaries, allowances or premiums) to all Cameroon state functionaries were graduated. Besides this, the President of the Republic had the prerogative to add or subtract the salaries of all following some kind of humour whose detailed analysis and ramifications fall beyond the purview of this paper.

Regardless of the category of civil servant, rendering services in any of the state Institutions was expected as per the Law guarding state functionaries to be the first sign post of undiluted patriotism where selflessness was always expected to be displayed

³ See how this principle is expected to work out if full in Hagman Tobias and Pechad Didier ‘(2011)’ *Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Dominion in Africa*” in *Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Dominion in Africa* (Gassington Oxford: John Wiley and Sons limited.),pp.5-6. Similar ideas are also carried out in Anita Schrovens “ The People, the Power and the Public Service : Political Identification during Guineas general strike in 2007” *ibid.*p.117.

⁴ Every corps of the Cameroon civil service has its standard specification both on the conditions to be fulfilled by aspirants to that department as well as the process of growth and promotions into higher categories. Aside this promotion could be gained through appointment into higher offices and specific services which followed mostly seniority and know-how though a lot more of it followed the discretion of the boss. It all of Ahidjos’ reign pretty much was done for promotions and appointments in the Military, judiciary and within the corps trained the Higher Institute of the Magistracy and Administration (ENAM) and IRIC to respect the factor of seniority and Know-how.

wholesale. The state on its part strove and succeeded to provide the financial and other resources that enabled those recruited not only to perform their assignments in the offices but also to feel honoured and secured in serving the state. Given that rendering service to the state was a cardinal display of patriotism first and foremost, the transfer of each individual to any part of the country was expected to be judged or perceived by that individual and his community as the call to service as deemed fit by the authority who had the power to do.⁵ It was in this very logic that appointments and disappointments were made.

Under the much trumpeted slogan of national unity, national Integration and National cohesion, Ahidjo used this perception to maximum good effect and succeeded to insert the fear of the state and the usurpation of public goods for private motives into the veins of all state servants. In this, he made the Cameroon Economy progressively admired and desired by so many within and without.⁶ This however, do not suggest that the recruitment of all into the civil service respected all the norms of a fair deal because elements of tribalism, favouritism and nepotism still survived. If some kind of praise was given to Ahidjo for scoring admirable national and international points with regards to the Cameroon economy, the same magnitude of blame was levied on him for transforming the civil service almost into a private thing where his convenience most of the time ran higher than that of the state. Mark Delancey paints this picture more vividly for the higher rostrum of civil servants when he opines that;

He (meaning Ahidjo) did not seek legislative approval for his appointments. He appointed his ministers his governors, his judges alone and they in turn, were entirely depended upon him and his favour if

⁵Bobé Martin Ngong who served the state in different capacities right up to the late 90s confirmed this in every details. He even went further to say that civil servants felt good to be transfer to other zones of the country because it gave them the opportunity to discover new people and different living patterns. He was interviewed in Bamenda in 2012 on a different subject.

⁶ For a good grasp of this admiration and the buoyancy of the Cameroon economy read Joseph, Takougang and Milton Kreiger in *African States and Societies in the 1990s: Cameroons Political Crossroads*, (1998) (Colorado: West View Press), p.40. Same ideas are also vividly developed by V. J. Ngoh(1998) in *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History*,(Limbe : Navi Group Publication,)pp.269-70. Also see emphatic description of this kind of high handed governance by Ahidjo in Abel Eyenga,(1978), “Government by State of Emergency” in R.A. Josephs (1978),(eds), *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon Under Ahmadoua Ahidjo*,(Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publisher),pp.94.

there were to remain in the office. The national Assembly had no role to play in the process and could exert no pressure on him.⁷ The survival of such vices during Ahidjos tenure of office added steam to the overwhelming feeling of rejection and manipulation that was animating the spirits of those who failed out of the orbits of Ahidjos favours across the political chest board. These same feelings were particularly sordid among the circles of aggrieving Anglophone and so the yearning for change both of governance and personalities at the helm of the Cameroon state remained in a steady rise.

In all, this made the promise of the New Deal by Biya to sound like a sort of a joyous day break following long nights of captivity to these lots that had been feeling like being systematically shifted to the hind of opportunism during Ahidjos reign.⁸ The promise that came with a swift switch of power through a constitutional process therefore created new streams of expectations notably to those in the art of rendering service to the state and the expectations that were to come from such stewardship. This makes it prime to understand the whole package of the New Deal era in Cameroon and how it affected not only citizen's stewardship to the state but also the entire question of state paralysis or decay from the 1990s and for some time after. Before delving into this an antecedent of the New Deal Era requires our attention

The New Deal Antecedent and Its impact on State Functionaries

The Political, social and economic situation in Cameroon was pregnant with uneasy calm and steady economic progress by 1982 when Ahidjo resigned from office after 25 years of servitude at the helm of the state. At the political lane, Ahidjo had used tactful diplomacy replete in wooing, brute force, divide and rule, intimidation and deliberate exclusion to secure a sort of oneness in purpose for Cameroon across a broad spectrum of fields.⁹ It was through this kind of Machiavelli mechanization of the political chest board that he succeeded to –merge all the political parties in both West and East Cameroon into one by September 1966 –manage and gradually contain the UPC nefarious attacks or rebellions that was a major menace to his administration –forced Andre Marie Mbida and those who supported his views about the political progress of Cameroon to accept the new normal as well as –neutralized the 1961 Cameroon Federation that was much in veritable worship.

⁷ Mark, Delacey, (1989), *Cameroon: Dependence and Independence*, Boulder: Westview Press), p57, This is cited by Takougang and Krieger in *African States and Societies*, p.51.

⁸ J, Takougang (1993) "The Demise of the New Deal 1982-1992" in *Africa Insight Vol 23, No2* .pp.91-101.

⁹ J. F., Bayart (1978) "Ahidjos Political System" In *Gaunist Africa*, p.49.

To this should be added the fact that Ahidjo also succeeded to keep every aspect of the Army, the Judiciary and the Administration under his firm grip. It was therefore easier for him to cause all the state Institutions to run in his humour and not forcibly according to Constitutional prerogatives given this extensive powers. Centralizing power in the hands of the President and those kept in position to worship him pleased some complacent spirits and displeased lots who felt either abandoned to fate or frightened out of the political rostrum to dare.¹⁰ Saddling these two classes of contrasting opinions about the political dispensation under Ahidjo were many dynamic groups of Cameroon mostly state functionaries who were buried in the conviction that, Ahidjo needed to quit office as president in spite of the good tidings that were coming from the state for indeed, there was much to be treasured in the direction of state crafting even in the midst of tight autocracy. The very fact that Cameroon unlike her peers within the Central and West African regions did not witness any civil war or strife of International repute helped to place the state among the high profiled nations and this attracted a lot of funding and investment of projects from far and wide.

In the realm foreign policy, Ahidjos' non-aligned positioning and the diplomacy of not playing a front role on issues of high controversy played to the Cameroon advantage. By being a pivotal member of the Non-alignment movement Ahidjo secured the friendship of all African and Asian states who were members of this group and by not always taking the first step to stand for or against a new event, Cameroon was often exonerated from the blames and resultant punishment that was a common feature of big power diplomacy during the Cold War Era. The benefit of this cunning diplomacy to state servitude under discussion is that, Cameroon benefited from a broad spectrum of conventions, treaties and other valves plus financial aid that improved upon their lot tremendously. The cooperation of international partners especially on matters of economic interest helped Ahidjo a great deal to keep his economy balance especially with regards to balance of payment surpluses.¹¹

There was nothing more resounding during Ahidjos tenure of office as president than the economy. Like most African economies, Ahidjo placed overwhelming interest on the Agricultural sector justifiably so because Agriculture provided the employment and export power base of the Cameroon economy. Either through the Green Revolution or the Five Year development programme, Ahidjos' policies

¹⁰ This was particularly possible because article 8 of the Unitary constitution gave Ahidjo the necessary affidavit to cover that distance all in the name of enforcing national unity.

¹¹ Abel, Eyinga, (1978), "The Political Economy" in *Gaunist Africa*, p.85.

at the helm of the Cameroon state deployed enormous resources to develop Agricultural structures and projects. As an employer of about 80 percent of the state servants, guarantor of about 60 percent of state exports, agriculture formed the nucleus of state institutions where service was rendered en masse. The provision of subsidies to farmers and erection of marketing boards that ensured Agricultural progress were the prime ingredients that kept all state functionaries glued to state policies inspite of the unconducive political environment.

It was in this ploy that the first president of Cameroon dabbled through the odd and hard to bear sentiments and expectations majoring from and overwhelming –Christian South-Islamic grand North – Anglophones-Francophone as well as the pressures that were mounted on him by foreign powers caught up with the exigencies of the Cold war. To this must be added the feuds and disharmony that reigned between him and Political opponents in French Cameroun as well as the debacle of ending the UPC scare. In sum all of this represented nightmarish assignments to Ahidjo and his political associates requiring skills of a lucre apart if the nation project was not only to thrive but triumph in all its social economic and political engagements. A lot of scholarship has attributed the triumph of Ahidjos administration to other actors and context¹² but this paper particular prized the fact that Ahidjo never toyed with the welfare of the state functionaries at the Micro and macro scale.

By any scholarship reckoning, Ahidjo was not only a dictator of high repute but also genuinely a political manipulator who held the interest of those who served the state and goods of public utility at highest of all esteem.¹³ This rare combination of virtues and vices helped not only to provide the tough strings that held the somewhat divided units of Cameroon into one but also motivated those serving the state to do so. At independence, Cameroon like most African countries South of the Sahara followed the steps of the colonial powers to put in place an economy where almost all the factors of production were handled or regulated by the state with private enterprises playing very little roles. This made the private sector not strong enough to compete with state own enterprises. With this the

¹² The list of those involved in this attribution of credits of Ahidjos administration is long and cannot be exhaustive in one study but a graphic picture of this scholarship has been zoomed in Joseph Takoungang and Milton Krieger, *African States and Societies in the 1990s* (Colorado USA , Westview Press,1998),pp,13-15.

¹³ Ahidjos magnanimous logic of brute force and skilful leadership packaged bluntly under Nation Building has been a subject of an array of scholarship with that of R.A., Joseph, J. F. Bayart, A., Mbembe, P. Konnings, F, B. Nyamjoh, Mongo Beti to name but just a select few.

salaries and other emoluments of those in the private sector stood at far lower echelons though this could still treasure some investment going by the standards of the time. The tempting salary scale of state functionaries and the certitude that often surrounded such offers caused the skilled and unskilled Cameroonian to consider serving in any office that belong to the state not only honourable but also truly rewarding. With the economy in some stable gear and his administration in some form of worship, Ahidjos tenure abruptly came to a surprising end on the 4th of November 1982 following his resignation from office.

Ahidjos Resignation and the Birth of the New Deal

All political, social and scientific calculation amounted to nought when President Ahidjo suddenly announced his resignation as president of Cameroon on November 4th 1982. This was particularly so because his was in the course of his 3rd year of his five-year term and more, because nothing in the direction of being tired or bored as president were visible in his stewardship to the state around this period. Those who had the opportunity to meet and work with him closely in his last days in office as president do not mince words in maintaining that he kept the tone and candour of a state man who was not only sure of his assignment and the world around him but also in full mastery of his future and that of the state of Cameroon he incarnated.¹⁴

His political associates and those who had along been yearning for his departure were all taken by storm as all of them were not prepared for such a new twist in the power matrix. With no precise reasons given for his resignation, speculation loomed and uncertainty became common placed but this was soon wiped away as he took turns to plead on Cameroonians to place their unalloyed confidence on his constitutional successor Paul Biya. The pronouncements made by Paul Biya upon assumption of service as Head of state seemed to indicate that there was change of personalities at the helm of the state but not a change of the system because he repeated pushed through the idea that there was no way of paying glowing tribute to his predecessor than continuing wholesale with the policies he had mounted and made concrete in public governance.

The fact that Ahidjo still remained chairman of the CNU political party which as he intimated “ was responsible of defining the policies of the state” lend

¹⁴ In this list can be counted Solomon Tandeng Munang speaker of the Cameroon National assembly who spoke with president Ahidjo shortly before his admission abroad and Charles Doumba personal secretary of Ahidjo at the time who is believed in some circles to have typed Ahidjos resignation. All these testimonies were carried by various versions of the Cameroon Tribune throughout the month of November 1982 and beyond.

more credence to the continuation of the system. If things were to remain this way all state functionaries especially those who never held appointed positions or had unmerited favours could have remained comfortable since Ahidjo had made it a tradition of always adding some incentives or reviewing salaries upward at the end of every year. Those who served the state for a greater part of their career under Ahidjo are in unison that, such numerations went as far as creating possibilities for some state agents to be paid salaries for the 13th imaginary month in most services. With a fair taxation system and the availability of subsidies to farmers and farm inputs plus banks that could easily provide loans for start-ups, life to almost all state functionaries was enviable by lots out of this service orbits. This in every sense had a positive impact in the quality of services rendered to the state for no one was prepared to see these good tidings slipping off their hands.

Out of the normal salaries that were both attractive and available every month for all those employed by the state and its decentralized institutions(parastatals), also existed a range of other allowances available to them like –transportation, allowance to all those appointed or transferred to difficult zones of the country –paid missions for those sent or on state missions both in and out of the country - array of scholarship opportunities for most state agents to study -very low interest loans in banks like Credit Foncier for those who needed land or buildings –low cost houses in some towns and difficult areas for those whose salaries could not readily withstand high rents as well as a tuition free studies plus a monthly scholarship in the loan University of Yaounde.

In keeping with the promises to Cameroonians Ahidjos lofty policies in Cameroon were to be pursued as much as possible, Paul Biya continued with the 1981-6 five years’ development programme which was central to Ahidjos economic growth. He further boasted this plan with a development of an investment code in 1984 which registered a positive fit back in the domain of agriculture upheld as the main source of revenue and Cameroons’ GDP by then. Such lavished opportunities for comfort and blossoming available for state functionaries only combined to make the civil service a destination of choice. With this, those rendering service to other private sectors in Cameroon state at this time had no choice other than perceiving the civil service as an Eldorado where opportunities for growth were deeply entrenched.¹⁵ As indicated earlier, all of this

sums up to explain why Ahidjos’ kind of power constitutional transfer to Paul Biya created the pandemonium it carried but the New Deal as a new Political philosophy and age offered something exciting though the application of the policies on the ground became a travesty as from the late 1980s.

The New Deal and the Fate of State Functionaries

After quite a few years in office Paul Biya and his political mentors had in their thinking secured enough time and resources to launch a new political age which he called the New Deal in Cameroon. As documented in its sort of dictionary called Communal liberalism, the new Deal was the guiding compass of the CPDM party which he launched during the Bamenda 1985 CNU congress. The New Deal in its detailed ramifications sought to- build a more reliable free -humane and democratic society governed by a new vim of laws enveloped with an enduring package of rigour and moral rectitude. All of these virtues were to be inhabited in an economy whose prime purpose is to serve its citizens in a true national character pieced together through conscious efforts which according to the authors of this policies were rich in their; marked departure from vices like tribalism, regionalism and personal hegemony. All of this had to be guided by the overlapping principle of Social justice.¹⁶

In elucidating the points of this new programme that were to have a profound effects on how the state was to be served Biya intimated that my modest aim:

... is to present to my countrymen the principle underlying the new society I am inviting them to build through the CPDM: A society of men who are free and spiritually [and sic] physically wholesome. For it is known today that the Cameroonian society today is still fascinated by values that are not tested and its caught up in a prolonged ethical and ideological odyssey. The society of Communal Liberalism, we want to build is one of openness and one that fits into the modern world that turn towards a more interdependent mankind. This community of interest is the basis on which we henceforth have to build a new political society, a society whose economy will be at the service of man in which social justice will be the guiding rule in the distribution of the fruits of our development. We feel that the material wellbeing is a prerequisite of the development of the Cameroonian in whom we will like to instil greater humanness...¹⁷

These are the compelling variables that threaded the whole package of the New deal into a comprehensible whole. The promise of openness and

_____ blessings than those lavished sums paid to civil servants.

¹⁶Paul, Biya, (1987), *Communal Liberalism* (London and Basingtok: Macmillan Publishers Ltd)

¹⁷Ibid, p.4.

¹⁵ Interview with Tibah Samson Bamenda November 8th 2022 and Aron Ngong. These are all teachers who served the private sectors in the 80s and 90s. Their admiration for the opportunities that were available for state servants is total though they insinuated that their pay from the church authorities seemed to yield more

social justice indicated to civil servants and even those out of the realm that; there was need to sit up and embrace a new dawn. The idea buttressed in this book indicated that there was a visible presence of a class dichotomy with most of the wealth in the hands of a favoured minority as a result of bad governance was impressive to most Cameroonians. The entire promise had its place in the hearts of many who were deliberately placed out of the orbits of jobs and other opportunities during Ahidjos' office tenure as well as, those who harboured the firm conviction that there was an active practice of negative regionalism, ethnicity and tribalism that worked in synergy to undermine their potentialities to deliver maximum service to the state. Great was the promise and expectations in the Social Justice scheme of the New Deal but greater and even more resounding was the idea of Rigour and moralization to rendering service.

Rigour and moralization which was the driving force of the New Deal /CPDM governing scheme entailed a broad range of issues all having to do with human comportment and expectation from his/her society. Rigour meant a sort stringency in approach, a consciousness to deliver or yield expected results within a specified time frame. To those serving the state, rigour virtually stood for a call to higher service and sacrifice with a polite reminder/informing that; laziness and anarchy had reigned almost unregulated or punished during Ahidjos term of office. Moralization simply came to justify the tint of humanism that was central to the survival of the whole philosophy of the New Deal. Moralization attaches a high premium to honesty, promptitude and an endless ability to exercise the love for the state.

Interpretations to this drastic shifts in policy could only be explained from the general sense of euphoria that reached it watermarked when Biya ascended the presidential throne especially the fact that, Biyas' relationship with Ahidjoinspite of the early promises to stand by and with each other, had sank to an all-time low. The change of the name of the party, the name of Cameroon state plus the shift in policy was expected in the general norm of things but the kind of stringency that was to be applied on those serving state remained in the realm of speculation. This did not become an immediate problem to worry about because until 1987 almost everything in the direction of recruitment and treatment of civil servants and their career remained intact.¹⁸ Those appointed in public offices like the Ministers, directors, governors, Dos and others were not only in full glory but more poised to flower and blossom in the gratifications that came with such higher calling. Stringency as stipulated by the Rigour and moralization which is an emblem of the New

¹⁸Emiley, Florent (1983), *Paul Biyaoul, incarnations de la Riguer*, (Yaounde: Edition SOPECAM), pp.1-3.

Deal had a direct and an implied meaning to this appointed folk. It directly meant that those of them holding offices were to sit up in their supervisory roles, in managing state budget plus the resources within the spheres of their influence as well as, develop the muscle to be transparent in conducting state business. It implied too that all of them had to size their administration to end within their defined limits and never to seek to break bounds in exercising their functions. As anticipation borne from speculations and positioning was growing ripe among those who were in the service of the state, Cameroon became a victim of an economic meltdown (slum) that negotiated a sad bend for the state functionaries and all of the Cameroon folk all along the New Deal era.

The 1986 Economic Crises and its reshaping of Servicing the State

The enigmatic promise of the New Deal and all the economic programmes plus the varied expectations alive among those serving the state in all the circles turned into a sort of nightmare following the Economic meltdown which the Cameroon state became a central victim in the mid-80s. In perspective, the Cameroon economy had created stabilizations funds which handled surpluses and deficits in the domain of agriculture and oil but failed to envisage the possibilities of diversification. The failure to develop an alternative plan for the economy and the over dependence on Cash crops could not be seen as problem but by 1986, the prices of these products dropped geometrically in the World market.

Though there had been apparent progress at the micro and macro levels of the Cameroon economy, there were still economic mishaps that were in gestation which glaringly escaped the attention of economic planners. The Cameroon case was not unique because there was this general lack of adequate reforms in third world to ward off any economic malaise like that of the 1980s.¹⁹ In any case, the economic meltdown of the 1980s emerged from the inability of these Third World countries' governments to manage and finance their civil services and to develop possible sustainable arteries through and within which, civil service problems could be appropriately resolved.²⁰ With this, the Cameroon

¹⁹ David, McCrone, (2002), *The Sociology of Nationalism*, (Lodon: Taylor and Francis, Routledge), p.8.

²⁰A broad range of scholars hold this point of view. A select few desiring our attention will include, Dun ,John(ed) (1978), *West African States :Failure and Promise*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press),Ela, Jean- Marc (1990), *Quand L ,Etat penetre en Brouse... Riposte Paysantes a la Crise*, (Paris : Karthala),Jonathan Frimpong Ansah(1992), *The Vampire State in Africa: The Political Economy of Decline* (Trenton : African World Press).The last two

civil service like it peers suffered from three pronged problems.

These problems made the Cameroon civil service and its related agencies to suit the description of being too large, too expensive and insufficiently productive.²¹ The problem of an overstaffed Cameroonian public service emerged from the fact that Ahidjo and even Biya were into this philosophy of compensation in recruitments into the Cameroonian public service provoking a loaded public service without corresponding to any technical or economic logic. In spite of this, the problem of an overloaded civil service had its two fold justifications though both were found milky when placed in contest to the broader economic theories of civil service establishment. Firstly, this emerged from a conscious over-development of public agencies and organizations charged with too broad and blurred responsibilities. Secondly, many agencies employed too many worker's vis-à-vis their needs.²²

An overpaid Cameroonian public service emerged from the fact that responses to macro-economic policies engineered the payment of exorbitant inappropriate salaries, a policy or practice which in turn contributed to the decline of state performances. It appeared glaringly clear that, for a long time, state employment in Cameroon were offering far less than they were paid since tasks were hardly met. The public sector or the treatment given to those serving the state was therefore central to the understanding of the economic crises that bedevilled Cameroon in the 1980s.

With this in view any solution or attempted policy to come out of this quack mire had to begin not only with a broad model of diversifying the economy but first and foremost with so many adjustments in the lot of the Cameroon civil service. It seems economic experts had been dabbling with the weight of economic recession for two or more years during Paul Biya tenure of office as president. This difficulty surely formed the basis of the rigour and moralization plus the social justice philosophies though this offered little because the economic recession continued to rage on with its attendant effects on the state agent's feelings and motivation to trust and serve the state.

authors have been lavishly cited by Takougang and Milton Krieger in *African States and Society*.

²¹ John W. Forje, (1999), "Rethinking the Role of Integrity at Public-Private Sector Interface: Coherence or Confusion" in Bulletin de l'APAD Itinéraires de "déflats" au Cameroun, pp.4-5.

²²-----, (1998) "Mapping a New Vision for Africa at the Dawn of the New Millennium" *ibid.* p 16.

The Raging of the Economic Slum and its ordeal on State Functionaries

In any case, it was only in 1987 that Paul Biya decided to tell Cameroonians the naked truth about their economy and the fate of those serving the state. Biya's announcement of the economic recession well on course and the series of measures that were to be undertaken, defeated all hopes and expectations that were in hallow of the New deal package. There was all urgency to reduce the country's, spending capacity and this has to be done by trimming the size of the civil service enormously. It was in this logic that state took upon itself to systematically reduce the size of the civil service and to curtail a range of advantages that were judged redundant. The decision to reduce spending through the curtailment of the advantages enjoyed by state servant was not nursed and made concrete only by the Cameroon authorities alone.

It was an idea actively held and sustained by Cameroon international partners like France, Germany, United States. These partners were even the first to point this out by arguing that the Cameroon civil service stood distant away from practical models. After years of hesitation, the Cameroon government had no choice than to bow to the proposals made by its partners through the Bretton wood institutions though was to be applied with slide modifications. As from the 1990s the IMF had the free hand to supervise the application of its structural adjustment policies on Cameroon. The entire package of the Structural Adjustment programme contained adjustments which all ran counter to anything good that was part and parcel of the advantages enjoyed by those serving the state. In the name of reducing public spending state functionaries found their days of affluence fading catastrophically as they lost access to allowances in subsidies to farmers, electricity, housing, and telephones to those appointed or on special assignments.

The case was further accentuated by the selling off or barely auctioning of parts of the government's vehicle fleet that formed the nucleus of civil servants' prestige and show off prior to this season. In the bid to trim the civil service to manageable size and to allow some money to the state to handle other burning issues, older civil servants were forced into retirement; the official working schedule was changed alongside the curtailment of missions to foreign embassies from Cameroon. This was further reinforced by privatization of parastatals enterprises as well as the complete closing down of many.²³ One of the key recommendations of the IMF was that Cameroon needed to deal with a

²³ Kwi, Jude Retired Civil Servant interviewed in Bamenda, November 20th 2022. Same ideas were ^h of August 202^h of August 202 confirming by Jean, Marc Etoundi and Epasse John a retrenched and retired civil servants whom we interview in Douala on the 6th of August 2022.

realistic budget. In line with this, the 1987–1988 budget reduced government spending by 18%, and this was the first time in the country's history that the budget decreased. In spite of these adjustments and its toll on those serving the state, the Cameroon economy continued to sink deep with the government growing tall in her inability to handle even its basics. Loans from the IMF, World bank and African development banks proved to be incapable of restoring state dignity and responsible actions.

This further pushed the state to undertake a series of other drastic measures all to the chagrin of state functionaries. Some of these obscure measures that shocked all those serving the public sector included a salary curtailment of 30 percent in March 1983 followed by another greater one of 50 percent in December of the same year. To this must be added the fact that civil servants were forced to go for two months with no salaries within this same year. The devaluation of CFA in 1994 only added more sores to the civil servants decomposing fortune all leading to the loss of state dignity. By 1995 the dignity and tradition of show off plus the conviction that the state was the surest of promises was found wanting. There were streams of disappointments with the state flowing almost everywhere especially from the huge crowd of retrenched (a) civil servants of active ages from the central and decentralized services (b) aging servants from all state and para-public Institutions (c) people who simply went idle as a result of the winding off of some parastatals as well as, those who abandoned the civil services as a result of being unable to stand the heat of the high cost of living in the urban centers where they rendered service.

To be taken into account in this realm too towers the fact that, greater streams of disappointment came from those who were still allowed to serve the state because it required more than a miracle for them to cope with the sort of shoe-string salaries and conditions of work that prevailed at that time.²⁴ International politics and national realities as from 1989 added another burden to the economic slump that was crippling the Cameroon economy. In retrospect, there had been a growing spirit of disdain about Ahidjos autocratic style of governance and a yearning for a change. This change seemed eminent with Paul Biya more so because he offered himself to Cameroonians in any public appearance always as the candidate of New Deal that had its heart on democracy through communal liberalism.

²⁴ Johannes Ndikvu Yaounde 2003, *Atangana Bienvenue*, Ahidjo Paul all civil servants who were not retrenched but they elected to abandon the public service to search means of survival elsewhere because their salaries as retrenched simply could handle just half of their responsibilities.

The promise of democracy in Cameroon by Paul Biya and the Wind of Change that swept through Europe leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union Republics, the Berlin Wall and the end of the Apartheid regime in South Africa combined to produce agitations for the opening of a new political space in Cameroon.²⁵ The ingredients of these agitations were the many disgruntled civil servants' state agents plus those who depended on them for a living in other sectors of the Cameroon economy. It is somehow confusing to state whether the series of Decrees signed by Paul Biya in the 1990s that liberalized the political space in Cameroon emerged from a willingness of the political class to honour its ideals of the New Deal or a fast move to obey the international calls and dispel mounting tensions that were at a dramatic rise among Cameroonians at home and abroad. In any case, multi-party politics and other forms of liberalization where people could vent their frustrations became a norm in Cameroon with its own kind of effects on civil servants' conduct.

Functionaries Regards to the State and Service Rendered in Economic Hardship

While addressing Cameroonians of all walks of life on the subject of Economic crises and the troubles that has imposed on the economy in 1986, Paul Biya urged them to look elsewhere for alternative means of survival for indeed, the state was no longer capable of providing the allowances and other emoluments to civil servants and other subventions as it was before this time. He was definitely suggesting that Cameroonians should diversify but sustained hard times active among most civil servants and state agents caused them to interpret this clarion call most of time negatively. They virtually took this to mean that the state had become so irresponsible to the level of not being able to anchor any beam of trust and respect from its citizens.

To this should also be mentioned the feeling which was also very active among these folks that Paul Biya was barely trying operationalize his cherished rigour enveloped in the New Deal programme. For the civil servants to be requested abruptly to divert from the affluence that enjoyed and begin searching for other opportunities to survive or augment their fragile financial situation, was a request hard to bear even in extraordinary circumstances. This turned out to be a scheme that inaugurated anarchy in the conduct of state affairs as most civil servants began indulging in vices which destroyed the dignity and trust of the public sector.

²⁵ William Zartman, (1998) 'Social and Political Trends in Africa in the 1980s' in William Zartman, Colin Legum, Steven Langdon et al, *Africa in the 1980s : A Continent in Crises*, (London: bolourado Press and Publishers), pp.73-4.

The Cameroon government feeling of guilt caused them to deploy an assembly of adjustment all aimed at providing time for State functionaries to engage on some gainful programs elsewhere. In this guise, working time and days were rescheduled within the Cameroon public sectors and its associated enterprises. Working hours were reduced to 8 hours per day and working days to 5 days. The logic in all of this was for state servants to gain time maybe to engage in farm work like market gardening and other petit businesses that could help close some holes in the family economy but it rather inaugurated a legion of mischievous activities within the work place and other related activities. It was this rise in mischief which recorded the darkest scenes of state servitude within the ambit of the New Deal. There was in all, a rising demotivation to render service on the merits of it alone. Service to state began being regarded as matter of the personal humour of the individual at the delivery point and not as per the policy.²⁶

In the hay days of the civil service where allowances and emoluments were not only constant but at a constant increase, so many civil servants did not care to develop alternative skills or talents to do other extra activities. In the 1980s most state agent's dependence on their job was wholesale. Asking these working folks at such abrupt notice to change their ways and become entrepreneurs almost all amounted to asking them to function in disorder. While others were brave and smart enough to engage in other things like farming, a lot more rather just devised varieties of means to create money entries for personal enrichment rather than doing the public good lavishly buttressed in the New Deal package. Instead of looking for possible models where service delivery could be more efficient most civil servants developed service short-circuits (administrative bottlenecks) and this became almost a permanent element of constant fabrication within their service chain. Demotivation as a result of meagre salaries engineered not only some kind of laxity towards work. It shifted civil servants' attention away from the quality of work to be delivered and placed it anywhere that cash flows were available.²⁷

Civil servants could be at work (effectively present) but not in the working trail (work delivery). Absenteeism, the near absence of punctuality and the general absence of a spirit to serve the state became banal within the Cameroon civil service. It is true that hard times brought in a general demotivation towards work and engineered so many valves of corruption in almost all the National Institutions but the scale was

particularly higher in the ministries of Finance, Secondary Education, Public service and Defense. These institutions were notorious in that; so many middle men and middle positions emerged and all of this had nothing to do with public service delivery than personal enrichment.

In spite of the appalling financial situation, there were still some shadows of hopes in certain appointments, transfers and recruitment into some technical services. This gave opportunities to those in the process of any of these to virtually keep all this offers within the threshold of market where the highest bidder got the job. With no special allowances available for those who were serving the state in far distant or remote places, very few functionaries were ready to be transferred to serve in such areas.

The Cameroon governments' politics too of feeling that public sector service delivery agents should as a matter of priority be allowed to serve mostly where life could be cheaper for them made appointments and transfers to the interior of the state mostly tribal biased. This philosophy of managing state agents conditioned by lack of liquidity rendered the process of transferring or posting civil servants quite cumbersome. The incongruence in this did not only come from the fact that merit and knowhow were all sacrificed on purely monetary basis but that; the Civil Service became tribalized or at best, ethicized. The unconscious erection of civil service clusters in interior zones of Cameroon began and grew to heights of almost completely destroying the policy of national integration where all state functionaries were bound to serve anywhere as deemed fit by the administrative hierarchy.

Again, the state habit of transferring or appointing people mostly to their place of origin on grounds that it was easy for them to cope acted inverse to the state dignity and boundless willingness to provide services. Once transferred to home towns most state agents exploited the laxity of control that was common placed in the public service to a negative advantage. A good number of civil servants in the name of alternative forms of investments especially in rural areas often vacated their areas of service and spent longer days off service. This did not come and go without making denizens to feel the functional absence of the state with its attendant repercussions.

Administrative Tolerance to Service Delivery

Discipline or sanity in the public sector is supposed to be maintained by so many authorities within the realm of administrative hierarchy. Discipline in state service was first of all a norm especially so because it forms the bedrock of the New Deal policy buttressed in communal liberalism. State servants of agents all belong to the Cameroon public service and their discipline is well enshrined in the public service Law. There are a paraphernalia of means and areas to

²⁶ See this in Peter, Geschiere and Piet, Konnings, (1993) eds, *Pathways to Wealth Accumulations in Cameroon*, (Paris: Karthala, Leiden: Afrikastudiceitrum,

²⁷ Transparency International Report on Cameroon from 1985 provide the sordid details

ensure public decency in rendering service which are to be applied daily. Out of the ministries and directorates where services are offered the supervision of public service conduct at the Regional levels falls within the administrative reserve of the Governors who further confers this responsibility to the Divisional, sub divisional levels with the institutional head playing the role of first evidence.

In the norm of things, a drowning person can only be rescued by an excellent swimmer and success in this endeavor is determined by the tides of the waves. As it was in the Cameroon during the early years of the New deal both, the drowning person (civil Servants) and the swimmer (Sub D.O.S, D.O.S, Governors and ministers) were all trapped by the same conditions. Such a case could have been rescued by judiciary which had the prime duty of making and interpreting the Laws or the gendarmerie and the police responsible for public discipline through the scrupulous application of the Law. Quite unfortunately for Cameroon, all of these corps were tagged to be the most corrupt going by the report of Transparency International which crowned Cameroon as the most corrupt country in the World for two consecutive years ,1998 and 99. Neo patrimonialism is the word that can better describe what destroyed the zeal of enforcing discipline to civil servant's deviant conduct. In context state authority and the elegance of automatic respect faded along with the deteriorating financial remunerations.

The curtailment of salaries and advantages to civil servants in the 1990s was not only limited to the lower class or those out of the office. The effect was even more sordid to senior state employees like D O.S .Governors, ministers and directors as they lost most channels of their financial flows. The loss of financial power virtually meant or implied the loss of political power and more resolutely, the loss of the vim to enforce policy application on the people under your care. There was therefore the growth of a form a guilt of not being able to do enough which expressed itself in some form of administrative tolerance that pampered or was complacent to deviant office conduct.

As if the Cameroon government and the whole concept of the New Deal was cursed by some form of a spell, the police and the judiciary helped to make the bad situation worse. The hardship and political turmoil led to a rapid rise in crime wave on the streets and criminal behavior at the work place. The attention of the Police and the Lawyers was needed to pull such vices down from glory but the police like other civil servants were charmed by the opportunities of churning out personal cash of various sums from the vulnerable ignorant masses. Even with the most determined of administrators to instill discipline in the public service delivery channels, such efforts were still going to be handicapped by the limited means (Cars, Constant shortage of petrol and security assurance) for these

administrative officers to undertake field supervision. All of this was made more cumbersome by the fact wrong or biased reports were constantly trickling in from the agents of security. There were however, some slide differences in the passions and fortunes of civil servants serving the state and regional and divisional levels.

Disciplining State Functionaries away from the Central services

The structure and service rendered to the state had its own particularities as one moved away from the central services. As indicated, the patron of discipline to these state agents at regional levels were the governors though some services and personalities in the ministries like territorial administration and defense failed out of the governor's direct authority. Governors depended on D.Os who in turn required reports from regional, divisional inspectors and others. In regions (by then known as provinces) like the Northwest, Southwest, Littoral, South and the Grand North, discipline was compounded by a different candour of local particularisms. In the two English speaking regions, there were of currents that compounded the tasks of most administrators to render the desired service of discipline.²⁸

In any case, so many openings were created through/in the liberalization of the political space and this gave room for the emergence of popular movements that raged havoc among worried and poor lots. At the top of such agitations were those carried out by the SDF party militants through ghost towns and various forms of civil disobedience. These aggrieving crowds were mostly composed by civil servants whose essence of opposing the state had its roots on financial troubles emerging from the drastic salary cuts plus devaluation.

There was also a huge crowd of those retrenched from the civil service as well as those who lost their jobs as a result of the closing up of some parastatals like Wum Area Development Authority (WADA), MEDENO and UNVDA who joined the agitations in their numbers. The Consciousness that people where provoked by genuine grievances whose solutions could not be readily provide placed most government officials in the position of guilt to engage full scale disciplinary measure to those found contravening the laws of service. The security and human climate in this two regions therefore did not unite the key ingredients necessary for the government official to apply the cannons of disciplines textually.

²⁸ For a graphic presentation of these currents read A.Ndi (2013) *Southern West Cameroon Revisited: North-South West Nexus 1958-1972, Myth, History and Reality*, (Bamenda: Paul press Publishers),pp. 1-3.

The difficulties faced in rendering discipline truly effective on civil agents for administrative officials in the NW and SW regions was not very much different to those in the littoral except for that fact that SCNC agitations that clamoured for a return to the Federal structure of the state was not central in the grievances expressed. Though such claims were absent, the littoral regional region notably the Douala Sea Port was top among the areas where civil service decadence went sour. Custom and taxation officials created elastic chains of collections which most of the time profited individuals than the state. It is in records that the officials tried to out order in this sector but such attempt ended as ephemeral wishes because the Police officers and the lawyers rather choose to be accomplices in the crime or indiscipline rackets.

As for the South region, there was the rapid growth of a wrong conception fanned by some egoistic politicians that opposition to the New Deal government or protest of any form from elsewhere in Cameroon directly implied a hatred for the people from the central South. The state policy of transferring or appointing mostly locals to run and head government services mostly in their localities of origins permitted these ill feelings to sink deep in the hearts of the indigenes. Such malevolent feelings produced a problem in two-folds each of the folds having its own toll on the application of discipline by administrative officials.

Firstly, it made the indigenes to develop an attitude in service which all pointed to the fact that, they owned the civil service and that anybody working or appointed to serve in it especially within their region failed within their sphere of instructions or discipline. Secondly, such a feelings sort of disconnected most of the inhabitants from respecting state policies on how service had to be rendered and virtually transformed state institutions into some kind of diluted traditional institutions where vernacular languages were used almost wholesome to run office businesses. Those who served the state either on appointed or transfer basis in most parts of the South and even central regions stands witnesses to the free percolation of tribal instincts and attitude towards work as a result of state laxity.

By practically transforming the civil service to run in the humour of traditional philosophy, these inhabitants obfuscated any genuine plan nursed by governors, D.OS or any other relevant administrator to discipline deviant behavior in the public sector. However, by the year 2000 a joint venture of the

Cameroon government with the Bretton woods institutions and its diplomatic partners had worked overtly to reposition the state authority among local folks in its rightful place. It was here that the CPDM government struggled to push through its agenda of a free humanitarian society.

CONCLUSION

The promise buttressed by the New Deal policy offered to Cameroonians by Paul Biya as a panacea to the many problems faced in governance is wholesome in its content, form and intent. It carries all the ingredients that are required of a model state with its heart on merits but its mass failure to be applied on the field has been a subject of scorn to the CPDM government in particular and Cameroonians at large. In the context of the Cold War wrangling and geo-strategic positioning by countries in both the Northern and Southern hemisphere, the New Deal model as inscribed in Communal liberalism provided a neuter model for state rebound and sustainable progress.

Scholars were indeed overwhelmed with this offer as well as the state functionaries more so, because it was promising to be more rewarding than many of the economic programmes initiated by Ahidjo. Most retired civil servants in Cameroon are on high blame for not doing enough in terms of investments for themselves and their dependents. Such blames grew mostly from the ignorance of the nightmares that entertained the passions of the Civil servants in service in the early days of the New deal era. We have attempted to sum up the trajectory (pride and prejudice) of those who served the state in any service of the public sector during the early days of the New Deal era.

Our contentions provide material that helps not only to explain why the New Deal rather became a travesty of its credo but also why, most civil servants could not do much in terms of investment inspite of the lucrative salaries they earned before the mid-80s. Besides causing an awareness on the need of state diversification, this articles reminds Cameroonians on one of the tragic moments of its history and political intransigence. It helps not only to remind those serving the state to know the ordeal that was part and parcel of their predecessors' servitude to the state of Cameroon but also to develop possible attitudes in preserving state dignity which had fallen to unthinkable heights in the late 80s and 90s.

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