

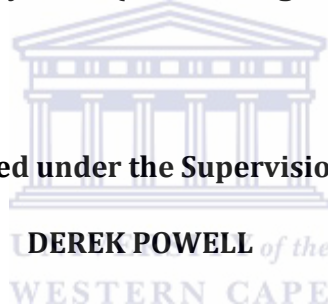
# UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF LAW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
THE WESTERN CAPE IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE MAGISTER LEGUM -LLM (GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALISATION)

By

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Prepared under the Supervision of



November 2010

***Breaking to Build:***  
***Decentralization as an efficient mechanism for achieving***  
***National Unity in Cameroon***



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## ***DECLARATION***

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I, EYIOMEN YOSIMBOM Raymond, declare that “**Breaking to Build: Decentralization as an efficient mechanism for achieving National Unity in Cameroon**” is my work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university or institution. All the sources used, referred to or quoted have been duly acknowledged.

**Eyiomen Yosimbom Raymond**



.....  
25 November 2010

## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

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I am grateful to everyone who supported and encouraged me during my studies at the University of the Western Cape. Your role in this achievement is significant. It is proof of the high value you all attach to education. I remain very thankful.

***Breaking to Build:  
Decentralization as an efficient mechanism for achieving National Unity  
In Cameroon***

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**ABSTRACT**

Governing an ethnically diverse country constitutes a major challenge for state power and government in Cameroon. The call for national unity, championed by the regime in power has had to survive strong demands for greater autonomy and threats of secession by groups from within an English-speaking minority. In response to these demands and threats, and in conjunction with reforms to improve democratic governance and service delivery, Cameroon's state administration has in the last decade resorted to decentralization as a technique for promoting national unity. The question this paper seeks to answer is whether decentralization is helpful or harmful to Cameroon's national unity. This study traces the historical, constitutional and political development of the concepts of national unity and decentralization and critically examines their application in the Cameroonian context. It further tests the consolidation of national unity in Cameroon against a theoretical and empirical framework of decentralization. A one-dimensional view of the findings of this study is not very encouraging to regimes seeking to enhance national unity through the implementation of decentralization. However, the major conclusion of this study holds the position that the political outcome of decentralization on Cameroon's national unity is largely a product of the constitutional regulation of both concepts and the manner in which the theoretical dimensions of decentralization are transplanted onto Cameroon's political landscape. The paper recommends certain reforms to assist and guide Cameroon as it simultaneously implements decentralization and consolidates national unity.

**November 2010**

## KEYWORDS

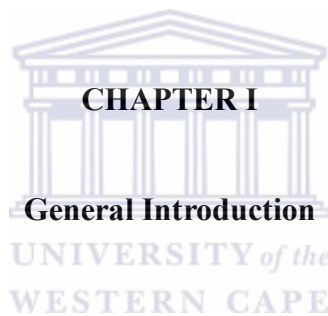
- National unity
- Decentralization
- Diversity
- Regions
- Local authorities
- Autonomy
- Secession
- Good governance
- Cameroon



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<i>Title Page</i>	
<i>Declaration</i> .....	i
<i>Acknowledgments</i> .....	ii
<i>Abstract and Keywords</i> .....	iii
<i>Table of Content</i> .....	iv
<i>List of Abbreviations</i> .....	viii



<b>1.1</b> Background.....	1
<b>1.2</b> Statement of the Problem.....	2
<b>1.3</b> Focus and Significance of Study.....	3
<b>1.4</b> Literature Review.....	4
<b>1.5</b> Methodology.....	6
<b>1.6</b> Structure of the Study.....	7

## CHAPTER II

### General Theory of Decentralization

<b>2.1</b> Theoretical Dimensions of Decentralization.....	9
<b>2.1.1</b> Administrative Decentralization.....	10

2.1.2	Political Decentralization.....	11
2.1.3	Fiscal Decentralization.....	12
2.2	The Principles of Good Governance as a Universal Standard for State Administration.....	13

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **National Unity and Decentralization in Cameroon**

3.1	Structure of the Government in Cameroon.....	16
3.2	National Unity in Cameroon.....	17
3.2.1	A History of Cameroon’s Experience with National Unity.....	17
3.2.2	Contemporary Cameroonian Experience.....	21
3.2.2.1	Legal Pluralism.....	22
3.2.2.2	Geo-political and Economic Diversity.....	23
3.2.2.3	Cultural, Ethnic and Linguistic Divides.....	24
3.2.3	Autonomy and Secession.....	25
3.3	Decentralization in Cameroon.....	28
3.3.1	The Legal Regulation of Decentralization in Cameroon.....	29
3.3.2	The Current Practice of Decentralization in Cameroon.....	33

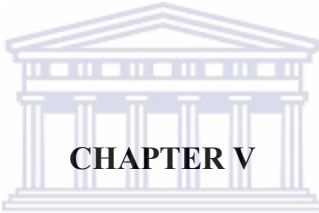
### **CHAPTER IV**

#### **The Current Political Debate on Decentralization and National Unity in Cameroon**

4.1	Comparing Cameroon’s Decentralization Structure with the General Theory.....	36
4.1.1	Constitutional Status of Decentralization in Cameroon.....	36
4.1.2	Constitutional Safeguard of National Unity through the Supervision of Decentralization.....	37



4.1.3	The Dimensions of Decentralization as practiced in Cameroon.....	39
4.2	The Political Consequences of Decentralization on National Unity.....	42
4.2.1	The likelihood of decentralization to facilitate full regional autonomy and secession.....	42
4.2.2	Decentralization as a cure for national power struggles.....	43
4.2.3	Achieving regional political stability through fiscal decentralization.....	43
4.2.4	Decentralization as a strategy to reduce the strength and influence of regions.....	44
4.2.5	Decentralization as a peaceful political agreement for national unity.....	45
4.2.6	The extension of state constitutional and judicial influence through decentralization.....	46
4.3	Conclusion.....	46



**CHAPTER V**  
**Recommendations and Conclusion**

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

5.1	Recommendations.....	48
5.1.1	National Unity should be defined in the Constitution.....	49
5.1.2	The Constitutional regulation of Decentralization should limit national supervision of regional and local entities.....	49
5.1.3	Horizontal Fiscal Decentralization and Conditional Grants.....	51
5.1.4	Local Government should be accountable to both the Citizens and the Central Government.....	52
5.1.5	Definition of Functional and Legislative Competences.....	53
5.2	General Conclusion.....	54
	<i>Bibliography</i> .....	56

## ***LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS***

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AES-SONEL	Cameroon National Electricity Corporation
CAM	Cameroon Anglophone Movement
CAMTEL	Cameroon Telecommunications
CAMWATER	Cameroon Water Utilities Corporation
CFA	Communaute Financiere Africaine
CME	Commune de moyen exercice
CPA	Commune de pleine exercice
CPDM	Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement
CRTV	Cameroon Radio Television
FEICOM	Fonds spécial d'Equipement et d'Intervention InterCommunale ( <i>Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance</i> )
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LON	League of Nations
MINATD	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization ( <i>Republic of Cameroon</i> )
No.	Number
RDPC	Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais
SCARM	Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement
SCNC	Southern Cameroons National Council
SCYL	Southern Cameroons Youth League
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SDO	Senior Divisional Officer
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WWI	World War One



# Chapter I

## *General Introduction*

---

### **1.1 Background**

The difficulties in effectively governing an ethnically diverse country constitute a major challenge for the state power and government in Cameroon. The most significant dimension of this challenge has been the need to respond to the political, economic, socio-cultural and developmental interests of its diverse peoples whilst enhancing national unity. The state and government face growing demands for full regional autonomy and real threats of secession. A centralized system of government has not effectively managed these pressures, and as a result, public discontent has been on the increase. In seeking to resolve these problems, Cameroon's government has embarked on strengthening national unity and improving democracy, service delivery and restoring public confidence through decentralization.

Cameroon has an extremely heterogeneous population, consisting of approximately 250 ethnic groups with some 270 local languages spoken<sup>1</sup>. Through its Constitution<sup>2</sup>, the Cameroonian government styled the Republic of Cameroon as “a decentralized unitary state”<sup>3</sup>. However, it has been argued that all constitutional arrangements in Cameroon between the early 1960's when the country gained its independence and the 1996 Constitutional amendments were designed to evade rather than resolve the problems of ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia of the Nations (<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/index.html>).

<sup>2</sup> Law No. 96/02 of 18<sup>th</sup> January 1996 amending the June 1972 Constitution.

<sup>3</sup> See Article 1(2) of Law No. 96/02 of 18<sup>th</sup> January 1996 amending the June 1972 Constitution.

and cultural diversity.<sup>4</sup> The 1996 Constitution sought to address the failures of the centralized system and to promote national unity while accommodating diversity. The 1996 Constitution introduced decentralization with the aim of addressing the divisive, developmental and administrative problems facing the country.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of these reforms was to accommodate the competing demands for decentralization and national unity within a framework of democratic, participatory and responsive governance.

The passing and implementation of decentralization-oriented laws and the call for national unity are informed by the need to promote “unity in diversity”. This paper therefore addresses the debate around the accommodation of culturally divided people in one united nation.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

One of the most outstanding defects of Cameroon, as a post-colonial African state, is its lack of genuine national integration.<sup>6</sup> A major dimension of this problem is the fact that ethnic, linguistic and political differences continue to widen the gap between regions. Ethnic conflicts and feelings of superiority of some cultures over others have exacerbated the problem. The inability of the state to construct a constitutional framework that democratically accommodates and reconciles the interests and identities of its diverse people is thus the principal failing of the nation-state in Cameroon. This is evidenced by the fact that national unity in Cameroon has not been afforded constitutional status. The guarantee of national unity in Cameroon is largely a policy concern in the hands of the executive. The state

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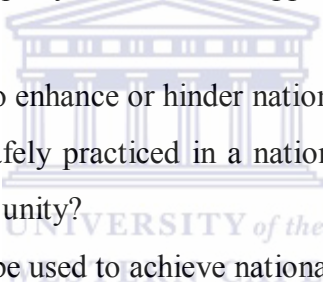
<sup>4</sup> Fombad C.M. (2008).

<sup>5</sup> Decentralization in Cameroon is governed by Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralisation. This law regulates decentralization in Cameroon and largely fixes the modalities for the transfer of certain competencies from the central government to regions and local councils. The Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon has identified the state of decentralization in Cameroon by making public what has been done, what is still to be achieved and the way forward. (Decentralization in Cameroon. Policy Paper from the Official Website of the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon ([http://www.prc.cm/index\\_en.php?link=files/decentralisation/decentralisation\\_in\\_cameroon](http://www.prc.cm/index_en.php?link=files/decentralisation/decentralisation_in_cameroon)) [Accessed on the 15/07/2010].) As at 2007, three major steps towards decentralization were identified. These steps included the creation of a Senate<sup>5</sup>, the creation of Regions<sup>5</sup> and the definite transfer of competencies and resources to decentralized entities. The importance of stating these targets in this paper is to lay down a standard against which the velocity of the decentralization process in Cameroon can be checked.

<sup>6</sup> See National Unity and Decentralization in Cameroon (*Chapter 3 of this paper*).

institutions thus lack a foundation in the culture, social values and ethnic identity of its diverse population. Focus is centred on the central government and accountability is tilted in the same direction. The state has also failed to serve as a suitable vehicle for providing public services to the population and promoting a democratic society. This failure of the state to provide services to meet basic needs effectively along with huge infrastructure backlogs has fuelled political tensions.

A highly centralized system of government has been a contributing factor in these governance and service delivery failures. If Cameroon retains its highly centralized system of government, the collapse of the political structure of the state and secession of some regions are real risks. The introduction of decentralization into the administrative machinery of the country in recent years aimed to resolve the state's political and administrative challenges. However, a critical examination of the present framework for decentralization raises important questions about the adequacy of the current approach:

- 
- Is decentralization likely to enhance or hinder national integration?
  - Can decentralisation be safely practiced in a nation which has ethnic fault lines and desperately needs national unity?
  - How can decentralisation be used to achieve national unity?

The effective use of decentralization to achieve national unity has been subject to intense debates. This paper seeks to contribute the existing research by closely examining the possibilities of reforming decentralization to strengthen national unity.

### **1.3 Focus and Significance of Study**

This study seeks to tackle two major issues. Firstly, it seeks to define the concepts of national unity and decentralization in the Cameroonian context. Secondly, the study critically examines whether decentralization can promote national unity.

How Cameroon has used decentralization to accommodate diversity and national integration will be compared to the theoretical frameworks in the literature. The lessons derived from that comparison will provide pointers to reasonable and workable recommendations for reforming decentralization in ways that consolidate national unity. These recommendations will not only serve for Cameroon but will be of assistance to the other countries faced with this political dilemma of “unity in diversity”.

## 1.4 Literature Review

There is a substantial body of literature on decentralization in divided societies, and divergent views on whether decentralization is a formula for achieving national unity. One school of thought argues against decentralization as a means of achieving national unity, with some scholars preferring stronger central government.<sup>7</sup> Fessha is of the view that:

*“Decentralization is regarded as a safeguard against the tyranny of the majority that is induced by the concentration of power in a single government actor.”*<sup>8</sup>

This is made concrete by a strong hierarchy that underpins the relationship between the central government and the decentralised entities<sup>9</sup>. Alesina and Spolaore argue that centralisation improves regional balance<sup>10</sup> wherein the various regions within the nation uniformly benefit from national resources. Regional balance results in the uniform and impartial development of regions, a situation which enhances political stability and consequently enhances national unity<sup>11</sup>. On the actual use of decentralization to achieve

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<sup>7</sup> Richard B., Francois V. & Edison Roy-Cesar (2010) *Is Decentralisation Glue or Solvent for National Unity?* The Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University.

<sup>8</sup> Fessha Y T, “Institutional Recognition and Accommodation of Ethnic Diversity: Federalism in South Africa and Ethiopia”. Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Law, University of the Western Cape, 9 June 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Steytler and DeVisser (2009) *Local Government Law of South Africa*, Lexis Nexis Butterworths.

<sup>10</sup> The term “regional balance” is a term of wide and recurrent use in Cameroons political environment. It is generally used to refer to the uniform political and economic development of regions within the country. Its use is extended to aspects such as the representation of the various regions in the allocation of national resources, positions in government and even recruitment into the public service.

<sup>11</sup> Alberto Alesina & Enrico Spolaore (1997) “*On the number and size of nations*”, Quaterly Journal of Economics, Vol. 112, MIT Press.



national unity, Kymlicka holds that it is unlikely that decentralization or federalism will enhance national unity. He points out that federalism does not provide a viable alternative to secession in multination states, and that moving in this direction may actually induce more people to think that secession is a more realistic alternative to federalism.<sup>12</sup> Bird, Vaillancourt, and Roy-César hold that although further research is still required to establish the link between decentralization and national unity, the outcome of the use of decentralization to achieve national unity is not a positive one.<sup>13</sup>

A second school of thought argues that decentralization can promote national unity. Reddy argues that devolving more powers to regions and other sub-national units/authorities will eventually weaken secessionism<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, Lustick, Miodownik and Eidelson have shown using simulations that the practice of decentralization positively reduces the possibility of regions tending to secede.<sup>15</sup> These simulations assess the impact of the strategies used by a centralized authority on ethno-political mobilization, secessionist activity and secession. From this model, the central authority effectively wins adherence from the agents under it by repressing ethno-political mobilization. This model establishes and advocates for the creation and existence of sub-national units but grants the central government a “strong arm” in the handling of national affairs. A contextual transfer of the simulation results obtained by Lustick, Miodownik and Eidelson to Camerouns political landscape suggests that decentralization can be used as an efficient mechanism in achieving national unity. Although it is of course dangerous and potentially faulty to draw inferences for the real world from a simulation model like the one referred to above, the idea that a taste of power may make little or no difference but that substantial devolution may result in significant reductions in secessionist pressure is obviously valuable to nations and governments grappling with the reconciliation of decentralization and national unity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kymlicka, Will (1998) “Is Federalism a Viable Alternative to Secessionism?” in Percy B. Lehning, ed., *Theories of Secessionism* (New York: Routledge Press), 111-150.

<sup>13</sup> Richard B., Francois V. & Edison Roy-Cesar (2010) *Is Decentralisation Glue or Solvent for National Unity?* The Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University.

<sup>14</sup> P.S. Reddy (1999) *Local Government Democratisation and Decentralisation: a review of the Southern African Region.* (Kenwyn, Juta & Co.).

<sup>15</sup> Lustick, Ian S., Dan Miodownik, and Roy J. Eidelson (2004) “Secessionism in Multicultural States: Does Sharing Power Prevent or Encourage It,” *American Political Science Review*, 98 (2): 209-229.

<sup>16</sup> Richard B., Francois V. & Edison Roy-Cesar (2010) *Is Decentralisation Glue or Solvent for National Unity?* The Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University.



Whether or not decentralization can advance national unity in ethnically diverse societies is thus still an open question. This academic, legal and political disagreement leaves a gap in the knowledge of the relationship between decentralization and national unity. Cameroon has adopted decentralization as a formula for promoting national unity. The salient issue therefore is whether decentralization in its present form is appropriate to the task of promoting national unity while simultaneously accommodating the country's ethnic diversity.

## **1.5 Methodology**

The methodological approach to be used in this dissertation will constitute a review of the existing literature around the concepts of national unity and decentralization. The works and publications of leading scholars in this field of study will be examined. Besides reviewing the existing literature on Cameroonian national unity and decentralization, analyses of international works in this regard will be a major component of the research methodology to be used. An assessment of the existing legislation pertaining to national unity and decentralization in Cameroon will inform an analysis of the situation in Cameroon. The above mentioned methodological approach will make use of three distinct steps which are of critical importance to the research question. The first is a comparative analysis of the literature and general theory on decentralization. This will provide a theoretical frame of reference to assess the practice of decentralization in Cameroon. Secondly, the paper will critically assess the current institutional framework in Cameroon, drawing on the theory and the current political debate around decentralization and national unity in Cameroon. Thirdly, on the basis of that assessment, the paper will propose specific reforms to strengthen decentralization with a view to promoting national unity, which have reasonable prospects of working in the current political context.

## 1.6 Structure of the Study

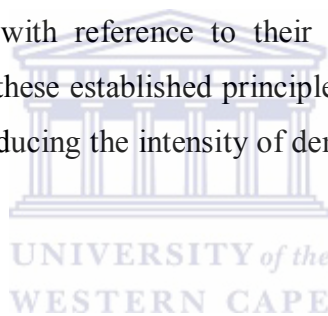
This study comprises five chapters:

### Chapter 1: *General Introduction*

The first chapter of the proposed research paper sets out the background to the study, the problem it addresses, and the significance of the research. A review of the existing literature on the theme and an overview of the methods of research to be used during the study will constitute a major section of this first chapter.

### Chapter 2: *General Theory of Decentralization*

Chapter two focuses on the general theory of decentralization, defining decentralization and outlining the various types of decentralization. It further examines internationally accepted principles of good governance with reference to their possible contribution to stronger national unity. Compliance with these established principles of good governance by states is examined as a possible way of reducing the intensity of demands for autonomy and threats of secession.



### Chapter 3: *National Unity and Decentralization in Cameroon*

This is a descriptive chapter which outlines the structure of the Cameroon government and the concepts of national unity and decentralization in Cameroon. These concepts are contextualized according to their history, constitutional/legal regulation and current practice.

### Chapter 4: *The Current Political Debate on Decentralization and National Unity in Cameroon.*

Chapter four assesses the current framework for decentralization against the theory and the ongoing political debates on decentralization and national unity in Cameroon. The assessment takes two forms. First, Cameroon's approach to decentralization is compared with the general theory of decentralization. This comparison brings to light the aspects of convergence and divergence between Cameroon's decentralization structure and the general theory. Secondly, the chapter critically analyses the political consequences of decentralization on

national unity.

#### Chapter 5: *Recommendations and Conclusion*

Informed by the position taken in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 recommends reforms to decentralization in ways that will promote a better balance in the ethnic equation, enhance democracy and political stability, and promote economic development. The ultimate objective of the recommendations is to provide a reasonable way in which Cameroon can simultaneously practice decentralization and promote national unity. These recommendations are tested against the questions of: what problem relating to national unity the recommendations seek to address; why and how the current system is not addressing the problem; and how the recommendations will address that problem/issue. A general conclusion showcasing the major argument and position of the study is the last section of chapter 5.



## Chapter II

### *General Theory of Decentralization*

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Central governments around the world are increasingly decentralizing administrative, political, functional and fiscal power to sub-national levels of the state.<sup>17</sup> In developing countries decentralization is often viewed as a response to political pressures for greater sub-national autonomy. This chapter examines the theoretical framework for decentralization and international principles of good governance as a standard for state administration. .

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#### **2.1 Theoretical Dimensions of Decentralization**

In many countries around the world today, some kind of decentralization is taking place, or is at least being considered.<sup>18</sup> The World Bank generally defines decentralization as:

*“the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector”.*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Litvack J., Ahmad J. & Bird R. (1998) *“Rethinking Decentralisation in Developing Countries”*. Sector Studies Series, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank.

<sup>18</sup> Bird RM & Ebel RD: *Fiscal Federalism and National Unity*, in; *The Handbook of Fiscal Federalism*. 499-520.

<sup>19</sup> *What is Decentralization?* : General Information on Decentralization, Site Index. Contributor: World Bank, Author: Decentralization Thematic Team.

As later examined in this section, the general definition of decentralization by the World Bank covers the various types of decentralization: administrative, political and fiscal decentralization.<sup>20</sup>

Countries understand and apply decentralization differently.<sup>21</sup> The World Bank Decentralization Thematic Team states that the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector is a complex multifaceted concept<sup>22</sup>. In general, decentralization can take one or more of the following forms: political decentralization, administrative decentralization, and fiscal decentralization.<sup>23</sup> The following paragraphs examine the various types of decentralization for their relevance to the issue of national unity.

### 2.1.1 Administrative Decentralisation

Administrative decentralization involves the redistribution of responsibilities and financial resources for service delivery, governance and administration among the different levels of government.<sup>24</sup> It is the transfer of responsibility for the planning, financing and management of certain public functions from the central government to sub-national units of government. These sub-national units include subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, regional and local authorities. Administrative decentralization is generally practiced by way of deconcentration or delegation.

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<sup>20</sup> *What is Decentralization?* : General Information on Decentralization, Site Index. Contributor: World Bank, Author: Decentralization Thematic Team.

<sup>21</sup> Rondinelli, Dennis, J. Nellis and G. Cheema, *Decentralization in Developing Countries*, Staff Working Paper 581, World Bank, Washington, DC 1983.

<sup>22</sup> *Decentralisation: Prospects for Peace, Democracy and Development*, Discussion Paper from the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, September 2005, Prepared by John Mary Kauzya. New York 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Litvack J., Ahmad J. & Bird R. (1998) "*Rethinking Decentralisation in Developing Countries*". Sector Studies Series, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank.

<sup>24</sup> *Political Decentralization in Africa: Experiences of Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa*. Discussion Paper by John-Mary Kauzya, Division for Public Administration and Development Management Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations New York. December 2007.

Deconcentration involves the central government dispersing responsibilities for certain services to its regional and local branch offices.<sup>25</sup> This is a form of decentralization which can directly be used to achieve national unity because decisions are made and implemented by appointees of the central government. These government appointees most often take instructions from the central authority and are compelled to give priority to national interests.

Delegation, as a form of decentralization, refers to a situation in which the central government transfers responsibility for decision-making and administration to local authorities or semi-autonomous organizations that are not wholly controlled by the central government but are ultimately accountable to it.<sup>26</sup> The provision of basic services such as communication, water and electricity are not directly handled by the government but by decentralized entities in the form of state corporations.

### 2.1.2 Political Decentralization

Political decentralization specifically involves transferring the power to select regional and local political leadership and representatives from the central government to the sub-national levels of government.<sup>27</sup> Political decentralization further entails the transfer of power and authority for making political and socio-economic decisions from central governments to local governments and communities.<sup>28</sup> This dimension of decentralization is fundamental to participatory governance because it gives citizens and their elected representatives more power in public decision making. This transfer of political powers to local levels is referred to as the devolution of power. In a devolved system, local governments have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rondinelli D. 1989: *Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries*. International Review of Administrative Sciences 47 (2): 133-45.

<sup>26</sup> Litvack J., Ahmad J. & Bird R.: *Rethinking Decentralisation in Developing Countries*. Sector Studies Series, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank. September 1998.

<sup>27</sup> *Political Decentralization in Africa: Experiences of Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa*. Discussion Paper by John-Mary Kauzya, Division for Public Administration and Development Management Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations New York. December 2007.

<sup>28</sup> *Political Decentralization in Africa: Experiences of Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa*. Discussion Paper by John-Mary Kauzya, Division for Public Administration and Development Management Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations New York. December 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Litvack J., Ahmad J. & Bird R.: *Rethinking Decentralisation in Developing Countries*. Sector Studies Series, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank. September 1998.

In contributing to national unity, political decentralization sets the pace and standards for political representation. Sub-national units expect to have more power and independence in electing their political leaders, representatives and councils. This representative autonomy ensures that the interests of the communities are included in the national agenda. The representation of regional and local interest at national level is a major expectation raised by the notion of political decentralization. Political decentralization is thus a device for enhancing national unity by ensuring participatory democracy and political stability.

### **2.1.3 Fiscal Decentralisation**

Fiscal decentralization is the financial dimension to devolution. This form of decentralization focuses on how public revenue and expenditure is organized between the levels of government in a state and how these intergovernmental relations are financed.<sup>30</sup> Fiscal decentralization is informed by three main principles. First, the assignment of expenditure responsibilities to sub-national governments is at the core of fiscal decentralization.<sup>31</sup> This involves the allocation of public functions and responsibilities to sub-national units. The second element is the assignment of tax and revenue powers to sub-national entities to ensure that expenditure assignments are underpinned by sustainable funding.<sup>32</sup> The central government often determines the tax or non-tax revenue allocations which will be placed at the disposal of the local governments to enable them carry out their specific functions and responsibilities. The taxing of economic activities taking place within regions and municipalities is a major source of public income. In more centralized systems, the central government commonly reserves the power to collect these taxes. Fiscal decentralization encourages central government to allow local governments to manage local taxation. Thirdly, in addition to assigning revenue sources, central governments may provide regional and local governments with additional resources through a system of intergovernmental fiscal transfers

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<sup>30</sup> UNDP Primer: Fiscal Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction

<sup>31</sup> *Decentralization and Democratic Local Governance Programming Handbook*, Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research, U.S. Agency for International Development. Technical Publication Series, May 2000.

<sup>32</sup> *Decentralization and Democratic Local Governance Programming Handbook*, Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research, U.S. Agency for International Development. Technical Publication Series, May 2000.

or grants, particularly when sub-national units provide functions on behalf of central government.<sup>33</sup>

Fiscal decentralization can be structured to build public confidence at all the levels of government. Public participation in governance results in an all-inclusive method of governance which is generally considered as democratic. The adherence to democratic principles by a regime attracts to itself national support and loyalty. This support and loyalty by the public resulting from the merits of fiscal decentralization is a tool for achieving national unity.

## **2.2 The principles of Good Governance as a universal standard for state administration.**

A major link between decentralization and national unity is the governance structure of a state.<sup>34</sup> Governance involves the processes of making and implementing decisions within the state.<sup>35</sup> How a government makes and implements decisions affects the political and economic life of the state. This happens by way of government decisions enhancing democracy and public participation. The economy of a state is directly affected by governance in that if government's fiscal and economic policies are properly formulated and implemented, the general national economy will benefit. With regards to national unity, the political and economic governance of a state can have a direct impact on the demands for full autonomy and threats of secession by regions. As will be seen, this is the case in Cameroon, where poor governance and underdevelopment are fueling ethnic tensions.<sup>36</sup> Good governance enhances political stability, and in so doing can help to address grievances that

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<sup>33</sup> See the UNDP Primer: Fiscal Decentralization and Poverty Reduction. A liberal and democratic pillar of fiscal decentralization consists of the allowance for local governments to borrow and solicit for funding to finance revenue deficits and to adequately fund regional or local service delivery. Sub-national borrowing is a manifestation of the financial autonomy which is expected to be given to decentralized entities alongside political devolution. Fiscal decentralization broadens the margins of political decentralization by providing for the revenue and financial power to carry out the specific functions devolved to local governments.

<sup>34</sup> Jesse C. Ribot: *African Decentralisation: Local Actors, Powers and Accountability*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Programme on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights – Paper No. 08. December 2002.

<sup>35</sup> Bolton, P (2007) *The Law of Government Procurement in South Africa* (LexisNexis Butterworths, Durban).

<sup>36</sup> *An Imperial Presidency: A Study of Presidential Power in Cameroon* by Mbu Etonga, 1980, Westview Press/Boulder, Colorado.



fuel demands for greater autonomy or secession. Bad governance, on the other hand, promotes decline in the political and economic development of the state, fueling demands for autonomy or secession of ethnic groups. As will be later examined, this decline is a major driver for the secessionist threats in divided societies and a potential threat to the unity of a state. Consequently, if a government seeks to enhance and promote national unity, its administrative techniques, such as decentralization, must conform to the principles of good governance to reduce the risks of secession.

The United Nations Organization has set international standards and principles of good governance. For a governance system to be labeled “good”, it must possess eight major characteristics. It must be participatory; consensus oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive; and it must follow the rule of law.<sup>37</sup> By conforming to these principles, the state government guarantees the achievement of the service delivery and policy objectives of decentralization and ultimately enhances the fundamental freedoms and rights of its citizens.

The entire idea of decentralization is founded on the good governance principle of public participation in decision making. In seeking to guarantee an all-inclusive approach to state administration, decentralization affords powers, competences and resources to sub-national authorities and their populations. In furtherance of the principles of good governance, efficient and effective decentralization gives citizens the power to elect their leaders and political office bearers thereby increasing local influence on public decision making. Transparency and accountability are principles of good governance which should be reflected in the design and implementation of every state administration technique. With regard to transparency, information pertaining to public administration and general service provision should be accessible to people who are either positively or negatively affected by state actions. Public accountability is a key requirement of a decentralized system of government. Unlike in centralized regimes where the appointed provincial and local administrators are “upwardly” accountable to the central government, in a decentralized system, officials are accountable to regional and local electorates. . In general, public institutions at all spheres of government should be accountable to the people who will be affected by their decisions. A further dimension to the principles of good governance which should be reflected in the

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<sup>37</sup> Bolton, P (2007) *The Law of Government Procurement in South Africa* (LexisNexis Butterworths, Durban).

decentralization mechanism is that the making and enforcement of public decisions should be consensus oriented. The political landscape of a nation, which is the playing field for decentralization, will usually comprise many role players: the national/central government and its institutions, the local authorities, civil society bodies, non-governmental organizations, political parties and pressure groups, the private sector acting as service providers and the rural and urban population. Decentralized administration requires mediation of the varied interests of role players in national public life to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the regions, municipalities and the nation at large. A particular advantage of consensus oriented governance through decentralization accrues from the ability of the state and its decentralized entities to design and implement projects which respond to the specific needs of the regions and also to take a broad and long-term perspective on requirements for sustainable human development.



## Chapter III

### *Decentralization and National Unity in Cameroon*

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#### **3.1 Structure of the Government in Cameroon**

Government in Cameroon consists of the central government and the regional and local authorities. At the level of the central government, the Constitution provides for three arms of government: the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government. Article 4 of the Constitution vests the exercise of state power in the executive and legislative arms of government. Cameroon's executive arm of government is bicephal in nature with two major institutions at its helm. The President of the Republic is the Chief Executive and Head of State. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government and leads a cabinet of ministers who constitute the body of the executive arm of government. Cameroon's Constitution provides for a bicameral legislature: the National Assembly and the Senate.

With regards to the regional and local levels of government, Article 61 of the Constitution provides for an administrative set up comprising ten Regions which are headed by Regional Governors. These regions are divided into Divisions headed by Senior Divisional Officers. These Divisions are further subdivided into Sub-Divisions with Divisional Officers heading these administrative units. As at 2010, Cameroon has 58 Divisions and 349 Sub-Divisions.<sup>38</sup> As stipulated in the Constitution, the regional and local authorities are decentralized entities. However, the administrative heads of the above mentioned units are all appointed by the

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<sup>38</sup> United States of America Department of State: *Diplomacy in Action*. Background Note: Cameroon. Bureau of African Affairs, October 2010: at < <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26431.htm>>.

President of the Republic, and answerable to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization. As will be examined later in this paper, this appointment of regional administrators by the central government is a departure from the general theory of decentralization.

Cameroon's local government structure comprises councils which are the executive and deliberative organ of municipalities. The councils are headed by Mayors who are elected at local levels. These councils are supervised by the Divisional Officers who report on the activities of the councils to the central government. As at 2007, Cameroon had 360 councils, of which 6 are city councils.<sup>39</sup>

The partition of Cameroon into regions is the result of the political history of the nation. The existence of ten regions in Cameroon is an indicator of the diverse nature of the state. In keeping this diverse nation together, national unity has been a major objective of Cameroon's state administration.



## **3.2 National Unity in Cameroon**

### **3.2.1 A History of Cameroon's Experience with National Unity**

The quest for national unity in present day Cameroon is a product of the country's history and politics in pre-colonial, colonial and the post-independence periods.<sup>40</sup> Cameroon has a complex history dating back to the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, specifically the year 1884. *Kamerun*<sup>41</sup> was colonized by Germany in 1884. After the First World War, Germany lost its

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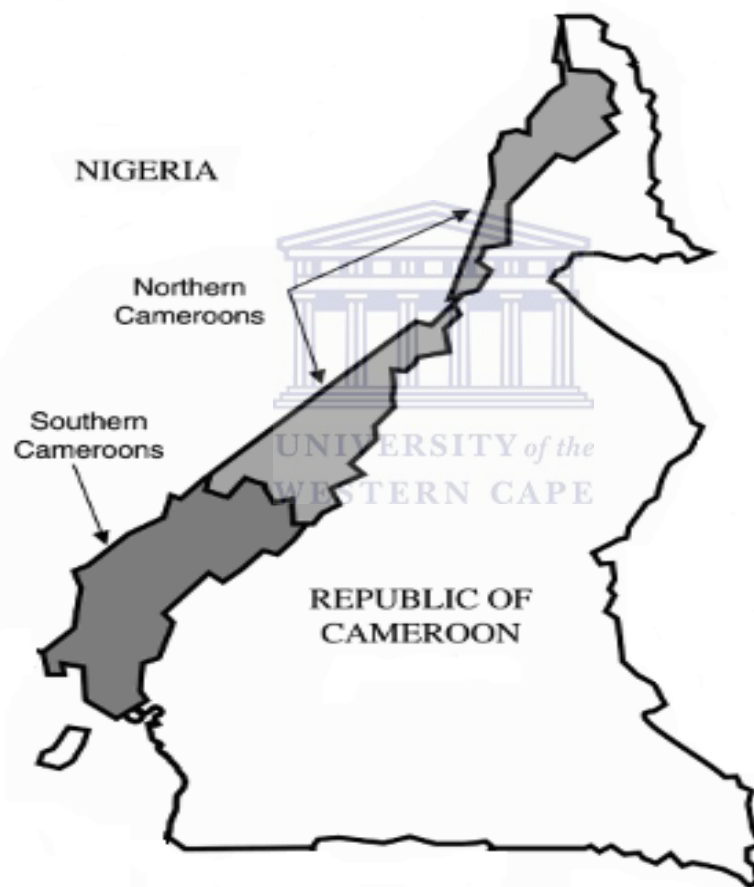
<sup>39</sup> United States of America Department of State: *Diplomacy in Action*. Background Note: Cameroon. Bureau of African Affairs, October 2010: at < <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26431.htm> >.

<sup>40</sup> *Researching Cameroonian Law*, July 2007, Charles Manga Fombad. Hauser Global Law School Programme, New York University School of Law [see <http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/cameroon.htm>] (last viewed on 10 August 2010)

<sup>41</sup> *Kamerun* is the German version of the name Cameroon. The name Cameroon derives from the Portuguese and Spanish word for prawns. Portuguese explorers were the first Europeans who in 1472 dared to venture out

colonial control over the protectorate to the combined forces of the French and British. As illustrated in Figure 2, German *Kamerun* was thereafter partitioned between Britain and France, with the British acquiring 1/5th of the territory and the French gaining the lion's share. The territories in Figure 2 referred to as Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons represent the portion of Kamerun which was acquired by the British.

Fig. 2: **MAP OF CAMEROON (1919 - 1961)\***



\*Source: Nations online. Country profile: Cameroon: at  
<<http://www.google.co.za/imgres?imgurl=http://2.bp.blogspot.com/>>

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of the Atlantic Ocean, to explore the estuary of the river leading into the territory today called Cameroon. Marvelled by the variety of prawns in the river, they decided to name it *Rio dos Camarões* meaning the River of Prawns. Spanish explorers later called it *Rio Camerones* for the same reason. This changed with the advent of colonialism, with the name taken instead to signify the territory. The Germans, the first colonisers of the territory called it *Kamerun* and the English and French coming after the First World War called it *Cameroon* and *Cameroun* respectively.

In 1919, the League of Nations mandate system recognized this partition of the country. This superimposed partition is the bedrock for the present day divisive tendencies in Cameroon. This division constitutes linguistic splits, ethnic divisions and conflicts, social/class stratification and politico-economic exclusion of minorities. The partitioned Cameroon was administered separately by the French and British under the League of Nations mandate system and later under the United Nations trusteeship system. In December 1958, the UN General Assembly voted to end the French trusteeship, thus paving the way for its eventual independence which was achieved on January 1, 1960.<sup>42</sup> This newly found nation was christened *La Republique du Cameroun*. The fate of the British Cameroons was established in February 1961 when a plebiscite was held, under UN supervision, to determine whether its people wished union with Nigeria or with the young *La Republique du Cameroun*. The latter option was voted for and this led to the declaration of a Federal Republic of Cameroon. This was a two-state federation which was made up of the West and East Cameroon. Figure 3 shows the two federated states of Cameroon after the 1961 plebiscite. In the map, “Southern Cameroons” represents the English-speaking West Cameroon while “Cameroun” represents the French-speaking East Cameroon. This Federal Republic had a constitution which was basically a replica of the 1960 constitution of the former French Cameroon. With the initial objective of the Federation being that the Anglophones will enter into a voluntary association in which they will retain a significant level of political and economic autonomy<sup>43</sup>, it has been argued that the so-called federation and its constitution was “falsely federal” and an annexation which appeared to be a federation.<sup>44</sup> This federal arrangement resulted in West Cameroon losing most of the limited autonomy which it enjoyed. This experience of a sham federation, combined with the colonial, ethnic, and linguistic differences necessitated a political rearrangement of the nation.

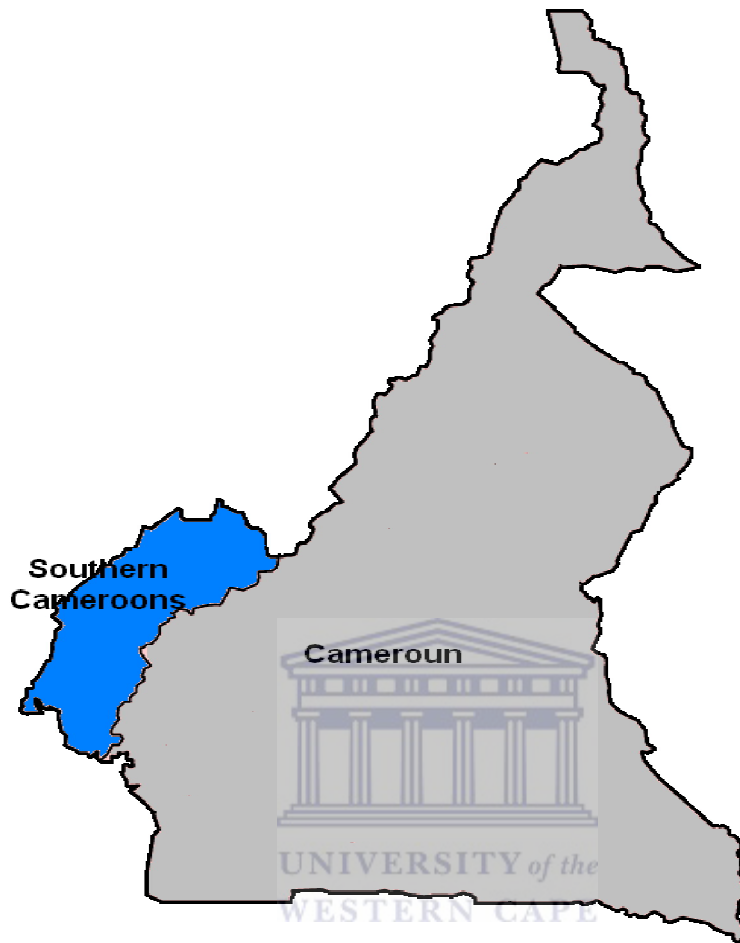
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<sup>42</sup> *An African Experiment in Nation Building: The Bilingual Cameroon Republic since Reunification*, Edited by Ndiva Kofele-Kale, 1980, Westview Press/Boulder, Colorado, pg 5.

<sup>43</sup> Fombad C.M. (2008) “*Cameroon’s Constitutional Conundrum: Reconciling Unity with Diversity*”. Published in *Ethnicity, Human Rights and Constitutionalism in Africa* Page 121-156, The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre Messmer in, *Les Blancs s’en vont: Recits de decolonisation* (1998). Pierre Messmer was one of the last French High Commissioners of the French Cameroun colony and was a close adviser of the former President Ahmadou Ahidjo.

Fig. 3: **MAP OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON  
(1961 - 1972)\***



\*Source: History of Cameroon: at

[http://nations.org/africa\\_history\\_of\\_Cameroon/southerncameroonsmap](http://nations.org/africa_history_of_Cameroon/southerncameroonsmap)

Faced with the above mentioned structural and economic challenges, the people of the Federal Republic of Cameroon identified the need for meaningful national unity.<sup>45</sup> This new approach to national unity aimed at stepping beyond the simple structural integration of geographical units and unitary government. It had the profound objective to erase the predominance of ethnic and cultural differences in favor of a nation in which all citizens were treated fairly and equitably. In 1972, Cameroon's President Ahmadou Ahidjo proposed the abolition of the Federal Government structure. This proposal was primarily informed by the

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<sup>45</sup> *An Imperial Presidency: A Study of Presidential Power in Cameroon* by Mbu Etonga, 1980, Westview Press/Boulder, Colorado.

failures of the federal system. Consequently, a referendum which took place on May 20, 1972 saw the massive endorsement of the proposal for a unitary system which led to the United Republic of Cameroon.<sup>46</sup> However, a major obstacle to achieving genuine national unity as intended by the creation of the United Republic of Cameroon is the potentially explosive divide between the Anglophone “minority” and the Francophone “majority”. This is one of the defects in the Cameroonian political and administrative system which the introduction of decentralization seeks to address and the central point of focus to this paper. The history of Cameroon as a nation suggests that the visible cracks in the unity of the country are largely a result of the highly centralized system of government that has existed since independence. This calls for a constitutional and institutional review of the state administration mechanism.

### 3.2.2 Contemporary Cameroonian Experience

There is no article or provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon that expressly provides for or guarantees national unity. National unity in Cameroon is rather a broad standard for the operation of national and political institutions. This means that national unity in Cameroon is not a distinctive constitutional norm. Its enhancement is linked to other concepts and institutions provided for in the constitution. For instance, Article 5(2) stipulates that the President of the Republic, elected by the whole nation, shall be the symbol of national unity. Although this article speaks of national unity, it does not guarantee it. Tying national unity to the institution of the President of the Republic leaves the central issue of national unity to the discretion of the President who may over or under enhance national unity. This current constitutional status is inadequate and therefore creates gaps in the general framework for Cameroon’s national unity. The constitution as the founding document of the state must of necessity be designed in a manner that can protect Cameroon from the problems created by its history.<sup>47</sup> Considering the fact that the constitution does not define nor expressly provide for national unity, it stands to be inadequate in protecting the nation and its unity from the divisive problems faced.

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<sup>46</sup> *Reconciling the Dual Heritage: Reflections on the “Kamerun Idea”* by Ndiva Kofele-Kale, 1980, Westview Press/Boulder, Colorado.

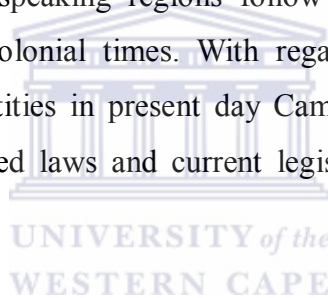
<sup>47</sup> Fombad C.M. (2008).



Cameroon is an example of a nation which displays a high level of diversity in all matters of public life. There are three major aspects of national life in Cameroon which are very much affected by the issue of ethnic diversity. The first is legal pluralism in Cameroon; secondly, the geo-political and economic situation of the country; and thirdly, the ethnic and cultural divide which exists within the nation. An examination of these concepts will further illustrate the fact that diversity is a major feature of public life in Cameroon.

### 3.2.2.1 Legal Pluralism

Two legal cultures are provided for and operate within the Cameroonian legal system – Civil law and Common Law. The French Civil Law system operates in the French-speaking regions of the country.<sup>48</sup> French Civil Law as practiced in Cameroon is inquisitorial in nature and codified. The two English-speaking regions follow the Common Law legal system inherited from Britain during colonial times. With regards to decentralization, the laws governing regional and local entities in present day Cameroon are a hybrid and modified version of the colonially inherited laws and current legislation adapted to suit the bilingual environment.<sup>49</sup>



Nationalists and contemporary scholars argue against the possibility of effectively uniting a nation which accommodates two legal systems. Marychurch (2003) rightly holds that pluralism recognizes the existence of groups within a society that differ ethnically and culturally.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the existence and practice of different legal systems in Cameroon is a manifestation of the lack of genuine national integration. However, recent years have witnessed developments towards the harmonization of the laws governing local government, decentralization<sup>51</sup> and criminal procedure.<sup>52</sup> With the purposes of improving Cameroon's legal system and promoting national unity, this harmonization of laws consists of the drafting, adopting and enacting of laws which take into account the diverse interests and nature of the

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<sup>48</sup> The country comprises of the ten regions (formerly called provinces). Eight of these regions make up the French-speaking provinces of the country. They include; Centre, West, Littoral, South, East, Adamawa, North and Far North regions.

<sup>49</sup> Henry, Samuelson & Co. *Cameroon Legal System*, September 2009. World Legal Directories, <http://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=7155> [Last accessed on 2010-08-17].

<sup>50</sup> Marychurch, JM, *Globalization, Federalism and Legal Pluralism: The Challenges of Diverse Legal Cultures in Federal Systems*, International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations, 3, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> See Law No. 762/PJL/AN of the 22 July 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralisation in Cameroon.

<sup>52</sup> See Criminal Procedure Code promulgated as Law No. 2005/007 of 27 July 2005.

Cameroonian population. In the laws, the population and institutions of Cameroon are considered uniformly with no differential treatment based on ethnicity, language nor colonial heritage.

### 3.2.2.2 Geo-political and Economic diversity

The diversity of Cameroon has given rise to a multi-party system. As of June 1, 2007, a total of 207 political parties exist in Cameroon. Besides the ruling party<sup>53</sup> and the main opposition party,<sup>54</sup> the other political parties in Cameroon basically exist and operate along ethnic and linguistic lines.

Ethnic conflicts in Cameroon as a threat to national unity appear to be based not on the actual existence of numerous ethnic groups. It is rather the political domination of minority ethnic groups by one or more ethnic groups who constitute a majority within the nation. In Cameroon, the English-speaking minority claim to be dominated by the Francophone majority and this forms the basis for ethnic conflicts. These ethnic conflicts constitute a major threat to Cameroon's national unity. It is argued that this political domination manifests itself through the exploitation of the English-speaking minority by the French-speaking majority in aspects such as national resource allocation and territorial domination. This argument that the mere existence of a proliferation of ethnic groups does not necessarily guarantee the development of secessionism seeks to point to the fact that national unity can still be effectively achieved in an ethnically divided society. This view is contrary to Kymlickas' where he holds that it is unlikely for national unity to be achieved in a divided society.

The Cameroonian economy is highly dependent on agricultural production, with trade, transport, communications, industry and energy, gas, electricity and other services also contributing to the country's GDP. There is a high rate of rural-urban migration due to economic inactivity and hardship in rural areas. The exodus of people from rural areas has

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<sup>53</sup> The *Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM)* – [known in French as] *Rassemblement Democratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC)* is the ruling party which has as its national president H.E. Paul Biya, President of the Republic. The CPDM is highly represented all over the national territory and a great majority of the national elite purport to pay political allegiance to this party.

<sup>54</sup> The *Social Democratic Front (SDF)* is the major opposition party. Founded in 1990, the greater portion of its support is from the two English speaking regions and some major urban areas around the country.

harmed agricultural production.<sup>55</sup> In part, decentralization was aimed at improving the rural economic situation. The devolution of administrative competences to sub-national units was seen as a way of improving resource allocation and participatory governance with a view to improving sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

### 3.2.2.3 Cultural, Ethnic and Linguistic Divides

Overcoming ethnic and cultural divides is a major challenge for the Cameroonian government. The government has sought to address this challenge by the integration of territories with different ethnic and colonial inheritances. Cameroon's centralized system of administration positioned the state as the dominant locus of power with the Presidency being the central node of a constitutionally sanctioned network of state and party institutions.<sup>56</sup> In this regard, Eyoh states that "this obsession with national unity and hostility towards the organization of any political interests outside the single party acted as powerful checks against ethnic political mobilization". Paul Biya rose to presidential power in 1982 and like his predecessor, sought to consolidate national unity through greater centralization. Until the recently instituted reforms on decentralization, a highly centralized state with all the regions of the country highly dependent on the central government for the regulation and exercise of administrative, political, legislative and economic was the norm.

Cultural, ethnic and linguistic fault lines affect Cameroon's state administration machinery in another way. Both under the Ahidjo and Biya regimes, appointments to top government positions have to a great extent been conducted along ethnic lines. The three prestigious national offices of president, prime minister and speaker of the National Assembly are divided between the three major cultural partitions of the country which are the grand north, the west, and the central south. Similarly, the appointment of members of government in Cameroon largely responds to the need to balance the ethnic equation. For instance, the June 30, 2009 cabinet reshuffle, which appointed 61 members of government,<sup>57</sup> constituted 8

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<sup>55</sup> Fonjong LN (2004) "Changing Fortunes of Government Policies and its Implication on the Application of Agricultural Innovations in Cameroon". *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 13(1): 13-29

<sup>56</sup> Dickson Eyoh (2004) *Contesting Local Citizenship: Liberalisation and the Politics of Difference in Cameroon*. Published in *Ethnicity & Democracy in Africa* (eds) Berman B, Eyoh D, Kymlicka W. Page 96-112, James Currey Ltd, Ohio University Press.

<sup>57</sup> Members of government constituting; the prime minister, vice prime ministers, ministers of state, ministers, minister delegates and secretaries of state.

members of government from the two English speaking regions and 14 from the *grand north*. It is therefore evident that culture and ethnicity have are of significant value in all matters of state administration and national interest.

In responding to the need for a participatory democracy Cameroon's state administration has outlined a reconstruction roadmap. This roadmap involves measures such as devolving greater administrative power to provinces or regions; protecting minority rights; enhancing citizen participation; promoting meritocracy; lessening bureaucratization and fighting endemic corruption; and fostering the greater participation of the civil society in nation building and the democratization process.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.2.3 Autonomy and Secession

Cameroon's cultural and linguistic diversity has resulted in one of the most pressing political problems facing the country today. This problem is the growing political agitation for the restoration of autonomy to the English-speaking regions, referred to as the *Southern Cameroons* and considered by many as a marginalized minority.<sup>59</sup> This supposed marginalization has been christened by many as the "*Anglophone Problem*" which is the major driver for the demands for greater autonomy and even secession in Cameroon.<sup>60</sup> The English-speaking regions of Cameroon make up approximately 20 percent of the national population and cover about 10 percent of the national territory. The root of this supposed problem is founded in the unequal partition of the country between France and Britain after WWI. This unequal partition sowed the seeds of future problems in that this accounted for the ultimate emergence, in a reunited Cameroon, of an Anglophone minority and a French majority.<sup>61</sup> With the introduction of political liberalization in Cameroon in the 1990's, some English-speaking Cameroonians began to make open claims for self-determination and greater autonomy. For instance, the secessionist groups such as the Southern Cameroons National Council and the Southern Cameroons Youth League were formed during this period and till date remain the major secessionist movements in the country. The political, economic,

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<sup>58</sup> Charles C. Fonchingong. *Exploring the Politics of Identity and Ethnicity in State Reconstruction in Cameroon*, Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture, 1363-0296. Volume 11, Issue 4, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> George Ngwane (2002) "The 'Cameroonian Condition': Seeking National Identity in a Unitary State". Country report, the Courier, African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries – European Union (ACP-EU).

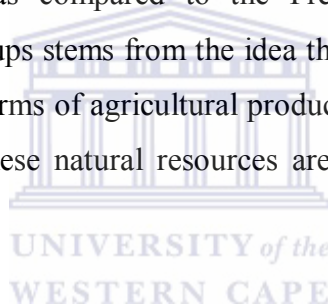
<sup>60</sup> Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997): "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon". *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35, 2 (1997), pp. 207 - 229. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>61</sup> Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997).

and cultural bases of these demands are varied and secure a place at the core of the debate around national unity and decentralization in Cameroon. The demands for autonomy and secession in Cameroon are fueled by a variety of concerns.

- *Economic grievances*

In the mid 1980's, there was a widespread economic crisis which hit many African nations deeply damaging the financial and economic fabric of these national economies.<sup>62</sup> The situation in Cameroon was characterized by the devaluation of the CFA Franc, huge salary cuts and generally sharp increases in the prices of basic commodities. This poor economic situation has recently been made worse by mass corruption within the public sector, embezzlement of public funds and poor management. In the face of the above ruin and disenchantment, the English-speaking secessionist groups claim that the Anglophone regions are relatively underdeveloped as compared to the French-speaking regions. A further economic grievance of these groups stems from the idea that the North-West and South-West regions are very resourceful in terms of agricultural produce and oil/mineral resources. Their claim is that the profits from these natural resources are not utilized to the benefit of its impoverished population.



- *Cultural and Linguistic grievance*

The secessionist groups of the Southern Cameroons claim that the colonially inherited French system of administration and culture has virtually overpowered and eclipsed the Anglophone system. This domination, according to the secessionists, is a digression from the initial terms of reunification and contrary to the entire idea of national unity. It is further argued that this domination manifests itself through what is considered to be the de-identification of Anglophones from their cultural identity.<sup>63</sup> A practical example of this domination of the Anglophones and their culture can be seen in the use of the national languages. Cameroon's Constitution provides that French and English are the two official languages in the country. However, in many public offices at the level of the central government in the nation's political capital, Yaoundé, which is predominantly French-speaking, some civil servants have

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<sup>62</sup> Africa Report N°160, *Cameroon: Fragile State?* International Crisis Group. 25 May 2010

<sup>63</sup> Kofele-Kale "Ethnicity, Regionalism and Political Power: A Post-mortem of Ahidjo's Cameroon" in M Shatzberg and I Zartman (eds.), *The political Economy of Cameroon* (1986).

the unprofessional and discriminatory tendency to deny rendering services to Cameroonians who are English-speaking.<sup>64</sup> Their justification for this malpractice is always tied to the fact that they do not understand English. Consequently, Anglophones are compelled to speak French in order to receive public services. This is a linguistic grievance put forward by the secessionist groups in Cameroon.

- *Political Domination*

A political dimension to the domination of English-speaking Cameroonians is the supposedly partial and discriminatory manner in which state appointments are conducted. Cameroonians who hold this view say that in cabinet reshuffles and other top government appointments, Anglophones are always given a minor share with positions of little influence. It is very important to note that the above mentioned claims are largely subject to debate because there are Anglophone Cameroonians who take a contrary position on this dimension of political domination.

The groups clamoring for autonomy and secession claim to be determined to “renegotiate” a new federal arrangement in which the Anglophone community will be recognized as a “distinct society” with a special status.<sup>65</sup> The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM), the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) and the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement (SCARM) are, amongst others, the major groups championing these “disuniting” and secessionist tendencies. With the consolidation of national unity largely threatened by these secessionist tendencies, state administration and the politics of governing in Cameroon has been directed towards responding to the situation.

Coupled with the need for improved governance, better service delivery and an all-inclusive approach to state administration, the threats and pressures of secession have largely contributed to design and introduction of decentralization by the central government. Furthermore, ethnic pluralism and the prominence of identity-based politics have also

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<sup>64</sup> George Ngwane (2002) “The ‘Cameroonian Condition’: Seeking National Identity in a Unitary State”. Country report, the Courier, African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries – European Union (ACP-EU).

<sup>65</sup> Fombad C.M. (2008) “*Cameroon’s Constitutional Conundrum: Reconciling Unity with Diversity*”. Published in *Ethnicity, Human Rights and Constitutionalism in Africa* Page 121-156, The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists.



contributed to the introduction of decentralization in Cameroon which carries in it a spirit of national unity, the restoration of regional economic development, administrative flexibility and the return to participatory decision-making. The use of regions, municipal councils and traditional leadership as auxiliaries of state administration ensures the recognition and representation of native and [or] language groups in state power. Even though this approach does not directly heal the divisive tendencies of secession, it reduces the chances of the situation deteriorating. This complex situation and the methods of redress make Cameroon a fertile ground for a practical and critical study of the use of decentralization as an efficient mechanism for achieving national unity.

### 3.3 Decentralization in Cameroon

The process of decentralization in Cameroon was initiated with the passing of Law No. 96/02 of 18/01/1996 amending the 1972 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon. The 1996 constitution is considered as a landmark in the development of decentralization in Cameroon because it established the decentralized nature of the State and stated the general principles of decentralization in Cameroon.<sup>66</sup> Article 2 of the Constitution clearly states that the Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary State. In actualising the process of decentralization, the Constitution provided for Regions and Councils as decentralized entities.<sup>67</sup> The result of this provision on the administrative setup of the country is that today Cameroon has 366 councils and 10 Regions. Cameroons ten regions as created by Article 61(1) of the Constitution include the Adamaoua, Centre, East, Far North, Littoral, North, North-West, West, South and South-West regions.

The Constitution further entrenches decentralization by stipulating, in Article 55(2), that regions and councils shall have administrative and financial autonomy in the management of regional and local interests. In advancing the development of decentralization in Cameroon,

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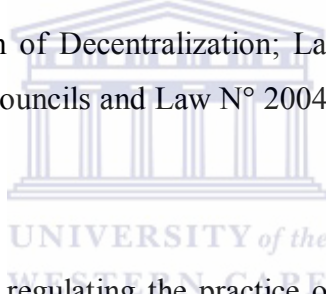
<sup>66</sup> *Implementation of Decentralisation in Cameroon: Problems, Challenges and Strategies*. Policy Paper by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, [in charge of Local Councils], Republic of Cameroon, 2007.

<sup>67</sup> See Article 55(1) of the Constitution.

the 1996 Constitution provided for the transfer of powers, functions and responsibilities from the central state to the local authorities.<sup>68</sup> The interpretation and implementation of these constitutional provisions has been the basis for the orientation of decentralization in Cameroon.

### 3.3.1 The Legal Regulation of Decentralization in Cameroon

The importance of decentralization in Cameroon is illustrated by the fact that it has been afforded constitutional status. As stipulated in Article 56(2), read alongside Article 55(2) (3) (5) (6) of the Constitution, the law shall define the sharing of powers between the State and Regions in the areas of competence transferred from the state to the local authorities. In giving effect to Article 56(2), three important bills were deliberated and adopted by the National Assembly and further enacted by the President of the Republic as law, regulating the current practice of decentralization in Cameroon. These laws include: Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralization; Law N° 2004/018 of July 22, 2004 laying down rules applicable to Councils and Law N° 2004/019 of July 22, 2004 laying down rules applicable to Regions.



The major legislative instrument regulating the practice of decentralization in Cameroon is Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralization. This law lays down the general rules applicable to the process and practice of decentralization in Cameroon. It defines decentralization, provides for the powers and organization of decentralized institutions with regards to the state and sets the scope for the implementation of the process. In an explanatory statement from the National Assembly<sup>69</sup>, the legislative arm of government which deliberated and adopted the bill, the essential objectives of the bill are:

*“- to enable the populations concerned to become resolutely involved in defining and managing affairs of their regional and local authorities;*

*- to foster and promote the harmonious development of regional and local authorities on the basis of national solidarity, regional potential and inter-regional balance;*

*- to place our country in line with constitutional and international requirements in the area of decentralization”.*

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<sup>68</sup> See Article 56(1) of the Constitution.

<sup>69</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> Legislative Period - Legislative Year 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session (June 2004), Bill No. 762/PJL/AN on the Orientation of Decentralization, No. 51/AN. National Assembly, Republic of Cameroon.



As per Section 2(1) of the Law on the Orientation of Decentralization in Cameroon, decentralization shall consist of devolution by the state of special powers and appropriate resources to regional and local authorities. This is the working definition of decentralization in Cameroon. From a broad and contextual perspective, the definition of decentralization as spelt in Section 2(1) covers political, administrative and fiscal decentralization. The first part of the Law<sup>70</sup> which consists of general provisions relating to the practice of decentralization in Cameroon gives effect to the constitutional provisions which creates regions and councils and provides for their status, powers, organization and functioning.<sup>71</sup>

In consolidating national unity, the law governing decentralization in Cameroon sets a very important condition for the practice of decentralization and local governance by regional and local authorities. Section 3(2) states that:

*“They shall carryout their activities with due respect for national unity, territorial integrity and the primacy of the state”.*

The practice and implementation of decentralization in Cameroon is therefore largely informed by and subject to the respect for national unity.

The law governing decentralization in Cameroon provides for all types of decentralization. Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralization in Cameroon carries particularly relevant provisions which give the practice of decentralization in Cameroon the political, administrative and fiscal status it requires for effectiveness and efficiency.

In line with the administrative dimension to decentralization, Section 4(1) of the Law spells out the mission of regions and councils resulting from the devolution of administrative and financial powers from the state. This mission basically consists of promoting economic, social, health, educational, cultural and sports development at local level.<sup>72</sup> This is a very important extent of the legal regulation of decentralization because it sets the scope of the functional implementation of the powers devolved to regional and local authorities. Of practical importance to the theoretical expectations of decentralization is the fact that the law

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<sup>70</sup> Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004, on the Orientation of Decentralization in Cameroon.

<sup>71</sup> Article 55 *et seq* of the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon (Law No. 96/06 of 18/01/1996).

<sup>72</sup> Section 4(1) of Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004.

governing decentralization in Cameroon gives local authorities broad and extensive functional and political powers.

Political decentralization consists of transferring the responsibilities for services to local governments that elect their own authorities. The law governing decentralization in Cameroon stipulates that regional and local authorities shall be administered freely by elected boards.<sup>73</sup> This provision is in line with the democratic principles enshrined in Article 55(2) of the Constitution. In aligning the practice of decentralization in Cameroon with the concept of fiscal decentralization, Section 7 of the Law stipulates that any devolution of power to a regional or local authority shall be accompanied by the transfer by the state to the former, of the necessary resources and means for the normal exercise of the power so devolved.<sup>74</sup>

The Law on the orientation of decentralization in Cameroon is divided into four major parts which extensively regulate decentralization in Cameroon. The first part elaborately lays down provisions on the principle of devolution of powers. The state is obliged to devolve powers to regional and local authorities.<sup>75</sup> However, Section 15 limits the devolution of powers to regional and local authorities by providing that the powers devolved by the state shall not be exclusive, but be exercised concurrently by the state and the regional and local authorities. An interpretation of this section points to the fact that although local government has the functional competence in the areas stipulated in Section 4(1), the central government is not completely stripped of the prerogative to exercise power and authority in these domains. However, this law is silent about a situation where there is a conflict in the concurrent exercise of power between the state and the regional and local authority. The concurrent exercise of power by local and central governments allows for potential power disputes and conflicts. In securing national interests, the central government may take decisions which are contrary to decisions taken at local government level. This open concurrent competence gives room for national and regional/local interests to be set against each other. The legal regulation of decentralization in Cameroon should therefore address the potential controversy raised by Section 15(2).

The organization and functioning of regional and local authorities is roofed by the second

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<sup>73</sup> See Section 4(2) of Law No. 2004/017 of July 22, 2004.

<sup>74</sup> See Section 7 of Law No. 2004/017 of July 22, 2004.

<sup>75</sup> See Section 15(1) of the Law.

part of the law on the orientation of decentralization in Cameroon. In Cameroon, regional and local authorities have an elected deliberative organ whose executive is further elected from amongst its members.<sup>76</sup> The wide extent to which the law on the orientation of decentralization in Cameroon regulates the organization and functioning of regional and local authorities is evidenced by the fact that the law provides for rules governing the property and contracts concluded regional and local authorities; gifts and legacies to regional and local authorities; legal action by regional and local authorities, and the functioning of local services. The functioning of local services is afforded a public law status, similar to that of national public services. However, in tailoring local service delivery to the local realities and resources, the law provides that regional and local authorities may carry out public services of an industrial or commercial nature.<sup>77</sup> This provision is inspired by the dire need to improve local service delivery through effective and efficient decentralization. It gives local government a free hand in the running of its affairs thereby enhancing the use of local government to achieve participatory governance and economic development. Sub-national public undertakings are executed, *inter alia* through the setting up of public corporate entities and the acquisition of shares in public, semi-public and private enterprises. The provision of local services of an industrial or commercial nature through sub-national public undertakings is however supervised and subject to the approval of the minister in charge of regional and local authorities.<sup>78</sup> In Cameroon, the Ministry of territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD) is the ministerial department charged with the supervision of the regional and local levels of government.

*Part IV* (four) and *V* (five) of Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004 can largely be considered as provisions which guarantee the use of decentralization as a mechanism to achieve national unity. State supervision of regional and local authorities is endorsed by Section 66(1) (2) of the Law. The Governor and the Senior Divisional Officer, who are state employees, are mandated to represent the central government, safeguard national interest and exercise supervisory authority in regions and councils respectively<sup>79</sup>. Considering the fact that national unity is given top priority on the political agenda of the state, the role of the Governors and Senior Divisional Officer's in local government cannot be dissociated from the consolidation of national unity. As per section 70(1) the supervisory authority of the council shall approve

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<sup>76</sup> See Section 29(1)(2) of the Law.

<sup>77</sup> See Section 52(2) of the Law.

<sup>78</sup> See Section 56 of the Law.

<sup>79</sup> See the provisions of Section 67 of the Law.

the major decisions of the local authority. The implication of the use of the word “*approval*” is direct. In a circumstance where the Governor or the Senior Divisional Officer identifies illegalities in the decision of a regional/local authority, Section 71 of the Law lays down the administrative and judicial procedure to be followed. The implementation of Section 71 shall consequently stay the decision of regional or local authority. This is an administrative and judicial procedure which can be practically used by the central government to achieve its political priorities. The strict supervision and “*approval*” requirement by the state of local government decisions allows for the practice of democratic local governance, yet the enhancing of nationally uniform standards and national interests, which are largely driven by the consolidation of national unity.

### **3.3.2 The Current Practice of Decentralization in Cameroon**

The current practice of decentralization in Cameroon is characterized by the effective transfer of powers and competencies from the state to councils as decentralized local government. Decentralization, a process which involves the transfer of administrative, political and fiscal powers between spheres of government brings about change in the operation of institutions and invariably occurs gradually.<sup>80</sup> This gradual nature of the process of decentralization in Cameroon has been styled by the mass media as government inertia resulting from the lack of political will to implement decentralization. However, significant progress has been made towards the effective devolution of powers, competences and the necessary resources to carry out the latter in Cameroon. On January 26, 2010, the Prime Minister of the Republic, who doubles as the Chairman of the National Decentralization Council signed nine decrees fixing the modalities for the exercise of certain competences transferred by the state to councils.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Decentralization and Democratic Local Governance Programming Handbook*, Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research, U.S. Agency for International Development. Technical Publication Series, May 2000.

<sup>81</sup> These decrees constitute the first generation of competencies transferred from the central government to local councils within the framework of the implementation of decentralization in Cameroon. These decrees include: Decree No. 2010/0239/PM on the provision of water services; Decree No. 2010/0240/PM on the maintenance of rural roads; Decree No. 2010/0241/PM on maintenance and management of Centres for the Promotion of the Woman and the Family; Decree No. 2010/0242/PM on the promotion of agricultural production and rural development; Decree No. 2010/0243/PM on the allocation of assistance to indigenes and those in need; Decree No. 2010/0244/PM on the promotion of the animals and fisheries industry; Decree No. 2010/0245/PM on culture; Decree No. 2010/0246/PM on public health; and Decree No. 2010/0247/PM on basic education.

The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of decentralization in Cameroon falls within the functional jurisdiction of the National Decentralization Council.<sup>82</sup> In this regard, the President of the Republic signed Decree No. 2008/13 of January 17, 2008 laying down the organisation and functioning of the National Decentralization Council. Chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic, the National Decentralisation Council is made up of the Permanent Secretariat and members, three of whom represent the Prime Minister's Office; two represent the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, and one each representing the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development.<sup>83</sup> The Local Services Inter-Ministerial Committee is another national body charged with the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of decentralization in Cameroon. Decree No. 2008/14 of January 17, 2008 provides for the organization and functioning of the Local Services Inter-Ministerial Committee. This committee elaborates the programme of the transfer of powers and resources to local government, makes proposals to the National Decentralization Council on the implementation of decentralization and further evaluates this process.



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Covering specific areas of service delivery within the local sphere of state administration, these decrees basically constitute of articles stipulating the transfer of powers to the councils; the responsibility of acquiring the necessary infrastructure and personnel; and the provision for the transfer of the resources required by the local government to carry out the responsibilities transferred to it.

<sup>82</sup> See Section 78 of the Law.

<sup>83</sup> *Decentralisation in Cameroon*, Policy Paper from the Official Website of the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon. [http://www.prc.cm/index\\_en.php?link=files/decentralisation/decentralisation\\_in\\_cameroon](http://www.prc.cm/index_en.php?link=files/decentralisation/decentralisation_in_cameroon). [Accessed on the 16/10/2010].

## Chapter IV

### *The Current Political Debate on Decentralization and National Unity in Cameroon*

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The Republic of Cameroon has maintained a relative stability in otherwise turbulent sub-Saharan Africa, which has experienced numerous inter-ethnic feuds, civil wars and military *coup d'états*. The apparent political stability belies the politicized ethnic divisions and national-level fractures which exist in the country.<sup>84</sup> In responding to the political pressures for democratic governance and the need to bring the administration closer to local communities, the Cameroonian government has resorted to decentralization. Decentralization in Cameroon has developed from the colonial days of undemocratic municipal administration to modern local government which makes use of the theories of decentralization and the values of democracy, good governance and constitutional adherence.

This chapter examines the current debate around decentralization and national unity in Cameroon. This assessment will take two approaches. The first approach will comprise of a comparison of Cameroon's decentralization structure with the general theory of decentralization which was examined in the second chapter of this paper. The second approach will feature a critical assessment of the political consequences of decentralization on national unity. The objective of this assessment is to establish the level of decentralization in Cameroon and to determine the outcome of its practice on the unity of the nation. Furthermore, this assessment will be approached in a manner which responds to the competing pressures for either more regional autonomy or more unity and the effect of

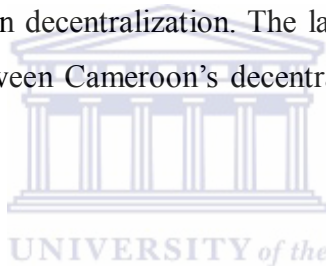
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<sup>84</sup> *Cameroon: Fragile State?* Africa Report N°160, International Crisis Group. 25 May 2010.

decentralization on these demands.

## **4.1 Comparing Cameroon's decentralization structure with the General Theory**

This comparison of Cameroon's decentralization structure will be divided into three categories. The first will be an examination of the constitutional status of decentralization in Cameroon with a bearing on its contribution to national unity. Secondly, an assessment of the supervision of decentralization in Cameroon in the light of the promotion of national unity will be done and checked against the general theory of decentralization. Thirdly, an analysis will be made to see to what extent Cameroon's decentralization structure and practice is a reflection of the general theory on decentralization. The latter section will identify points of convergence and divergence between Cameroon's decentralization structure and the general theory.



### **4.1.1 Constitutional status of decentralization in Cameroon**

Cameroon has a constitution that is explicitly pro-decentralization and formally recognizes the existence of regional and local authorities. Law N° 96/6 of 18/01/1996 amending the June 1972 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon clearly states in its Article 2 that:

*“the Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary state”.*

An entire part of Cameroons constitution is dedicated to regional and local authorities. *Part X* (ten) of the Constitution, entitled “Regional Authorities”, comprises eight articles and is the section which anchors the constitutionalisation of decentralization in Cameroon.<sup>85</sup>

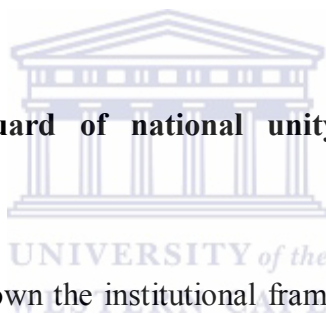
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<sup>85</sup> Considered as the country in Africa with the highest degree/index value of decentralization, South Africa has a constitution which expressly entrenches decentralisation as technique of state administration. Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution, entitled “Local Government”, exists to serve the same purpose as *Part X* of Cameroons constitution. Ndegwa, N.: *Decentralization in Africa: A Stocktaking Survey*, Africa Region Working Paper Series, No. 40, World Bank, Washington, 2002. Figure 1 of this article indicates that South Africa and Uganda have the highest index values of decentralization in Africa. South Africa has three spheres of government which are distinct, interdependent and interrelated (Section 40(1) of the SA Constitution). These three spheres of government are constitutionally obliged to observe and adhere to the principles of co-operative



In the drive towards decentralization, the content of Articles 55 – 62 of the Constitution<sup>86</sup> provides for and regulates the status, powers, organization, functioning and state supervision of regional and local authorities. Cameroon's Regional and local authorities are basically regions and councils<sup>87</sup> which are public law corporate bodies with administrative and financial autonomy in the management of regional and local interests.<sup>88</sup> The core of decentralization in Cameroon is Article 56 of the Constitution which requires the state to transfer to the regions, under conditions laid down by law, jurisdiction in areas necessary for their economic, social, health, educational, cultural and sports development.<sup>89</sup> The implementation of this constitutional mandate is done through the actual process of devolution of power. According a constitutional status to decentralization and its institutions is informed by the state's wish not to have any individual, institution or future legislation compromise the deepening of the democratization process and the dire need to continually improve local service delivery.

#### **4.1.2 Constitutional safeguard of national unity through the supervision of decentralization**



Although the constitution lays down the institutional framework for decentralization, it also safeguards national interests, state security and territorial integrity. This constitutional balancing of centripetal and centrifugal forces is done through state supervision, oversight and *tutelle*. The *tutelle* concept is a system of close oversight inherited from the French administrative model in which decisions of the regional and local councils must be approved by the *sous-préfet*<sup>90</sup> and *préfet*<sup>91</sup> or any other state appointed delegate.<sup>92</sup> Article 55(3) of the Constitution expressly provides that the state shall exercise supervisory powers over regional and local authorities, under conditions laid down by law. This supervision initially gives the

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government and intergovernmental relations which are spelt out in Chapter 3 of the SA Constitution. The country has nine highly decentralized provinces consisting of 283 municipalities.

<sup>86</sup> Law N° 96/06 of 18 January 1996 amending the June 1972 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon.

<sup>87</sup> See Article 55(1) of the Constitution.

<sup>88</sup> See Article 55(2).

<sup>89</sup> See Article 56(1).

<sup>90</sup> French phrase representing the Divisional Officer who is the administrative head of the Sub-Division in France and its former colonies.

<sup>91</sup> French phrase representing the Senior Divisional Officer who is the administrative head of the Division in France and its former colonies.

<sup>92</sup> Jesse C. Ribot: *African Decentralisation: Local Actors, Powers and Accountability*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Programme on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights – Paper No. 08. December 2002.



President of the Republic the power to appoint a delegate who shall represent and profile the interest of the state in the region.<sup>93</sup> An understanding of the concept of *tutelle*, as used in Cameroon, points to the fact that the tight supervision of decentralized entities is meant to ensure that national interests are promoted at regional and local levels. The operation, functioning and decisions taken by the region must be approved by the state which has a full-time representative at the regional level.

The Constitution further provides that the Regional Council, its President or its Bureau may be suspended by the President of the Republic where such an organ carries out activities contrary to the constitution, undermines the security of the state or public law and order and/or endangers the state's territorial integrity.<sup>94</sup> The protection of state interest and consolidation of national unity in Cameroons decentralization approach is further proven by the fact that the “democratically elected” regional council presidents and bureaus can be dismissed by the President of the Republic after due consultation with the Constitutional court.<sup>95</sup>

A study of the constitutional approach to decentralization in Cameroon makes it clear that administrative and political power is transferred from the central government to lower levels of government with numerous restraints, reservations and supervision. A literal interpretation of the word “supervision” and its use in the provisions of articles 55 – 61 of the Constitution extends the scope of government supervision to a point where it can comfortably be considered as intervention. With the power to approve, intervene, suspend and dismiss elected regional organs given to the central government, decentralization in Cameroon is structured and practiced as a well coordinated strategy to achieve participatory democracy, developmental local government and improved service delivery but at the same time ensuring the continuous existence of a nationally recognized government which is a symbol of national unity.

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<sup>93</sup> See Article 58(1).

<sup>94</sup> See Article 60(1).

<sup>95</sup> See Article 60(2).

### 4.1.3 The dimensions of decentralization as practiced in Cameroon

- *Administrative Decentralization in Cameroon*

Administrative decentralization as used in Cameroon is structured in such a way which obliges decentralized entities to be accountable to the central government. The direction of accountability to the central government instead of the local population and the electorate gives the government the power to impose its agenda of national unity of the governed. This analysis is evidence of the fact that deconcentration and delegation as forms of decentralization do not achieve the desired goals of decentralization, but allow national governments with the possibility of disguising centralization with decentralized reforms.

Before the passing and implementation of Law N° 2004/017 of July 22, 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralization, deconcentration was the most predominant form of sub-national governance used by the government of Cameroon. The central government, through the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization established regions which up till today are headed by Governors, who are deconcentrated authorities and appointed by the President of the Republic. Answerable to the governor in this hierarchy are Senior Divisional Officers, Divisional Officers and Districts Heads who are appointed by the central government. Deconcentration, as practiced in Cameroon and many countries around the world, does not involve any transfer of substantial authority to sub-national units but allows the local field offices of the central government to be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.<sup>96</sup>

The use of delegation by the Cameroon government is closely linked to the consolidation of a superiority central authority and preserving national unity. In safeguarding national unity, the Cameroon government ensures that decentralized entities provide services which are of critical importance to the public thereby compelling them to function in close collaboration with the central government. Considering the nation-wide scope of the delegated entities, the national government oversees decentralization and aligns delegation with the promotion of its political agenda which has national unity as a top priority. An example of the practice of delegation as a form of decentralization in Cameroon is the status and functioning of the state corporations such as the Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV), AES-SONEL, CAMTEL,

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<sup>96</sup> Kornai J.: *The Socialist System*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1992.

CAMWATER and the six state universities, which provide the basic services which should have been provided by the central government. Although the senior officials of these institutions are designated by the central government, the latter does not control them.

- *Political Decentralization in Cameroon*

In Cameroon, political decentralization is provided for in the form of elected municipal councils and their authorities. These municipal authorities are elected by the local communities and are accountable to them. The state only plays a supervisory role over the politically decentralized entities, through the Senior Divisional Officer who is vested with the supervisory authority of the municipal council. Owing to the fact that politically decentralized entities are elected, municipal councils are intended to be accountable to the electorate. Electoral democracy and public accountability are thus the major pillars of political decentralization. These ideals of democracy and accountability to the electorate constitute the major differences between the practice of political decentralization and administrative decentralization in Cameroon.

Political decentralization has contributed to national unity in present day Cameroon by ensuring that there is an equitable allocation and management of national resources amongst the units of government. Although largely covered by fiscal decentralization, the allocation of resources to regions in Cameroon is largely motivated by the political leanings of the entity to which the resources are allocated to. In the light of this political dimension, regional and municipal entities strive for representation at the national level so as to secure from the central government the resources and revenue they need to develop their territories. This allocation can only be properly done if the national government is well informed about the needs and specific interests of the decentralized entities. The proper allocation of resources largely results in a stable political atmosphere which is a critical condition for the enhancement and consolidation of national unity. In addition, the representative autonomy which results from the devolution of powers assists regional and local governments to efficiently manage and utilize their local resources to the benefit of the region. In Cameroon, financial allocations are provided for by the finance bill, an instrument which is prepared by the central government, voted by the National Assembly and promulgated as the State Budget by the head of the President of the Republic. According to the laws governing

decentralization in Cameroon and in order to ensure that decentralization achieves its objectives, the central government must allocate the necessary financial resources to the sub-national units.

- *Fiscal Decentralization in Cameroon*

In contributing to Cameroon's national unity, fiscal decentralization is associated with the nation's improved fiscal and macroeconomic performance. The actual functioning of fiscal decentralization in Cameroon has its direct effects focused on local government but the effects spill beyond local boundaries resulting in a uniformly stable national economy which is a fundamental vehicle for national unity. Intergovernmental transfers such as conditional grants have greatly addressed projects that have outcomes of national benefit. For instance the financing of road projects, the building of schools and the provision of portable water in rural areas are largely products of intergovernmental transfers. As indicated in the general theory of decentralization, the practice of fiscal decentralization in Cameroon has resulted in the restoration of some of the lost confidence of the public in the governmental financial system. Directly impacting on national unity, the restored confidence and loyalty from the public resulting from the merits of fiscal decentralization has been instrumental in the consolidation of Cameroon's national unity thus far.

Fiscal decentralization in the Cameroonian context is basically about responding to the financial side of local governance. The central government has allocated certain revenue sources to the decentralized entities. In Cameroon, the taxing of economic activities which take place within regions and municipalities is a major revenue source allocated to these entities. The Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance (FEICOM) is the national body charged with the financial empowerment and support of decentralized entities in Cameroon. This institution is the communal bank for local government and serves as the main channel through which intergovernmental transfers are handed down to municipalities in Cameroon. As at 2007, FEICOM was responsible for providing funds estimated to constitute 80% of the overall revenues of local collectivities in rural areas.

## 4.2 Political Consequences of Decentralization on National Unity

### 4.2.1 The likelihood of decentralization to facilitate full regional autonomy and secession

Decentralization may not necessarily provide a remedy for secession nor will it fan the flame of national unity. Instead, the practice of decentralization or federalism may actually induce more people to think that secession is a more realistic alternative to federalism.<sup>97</sup> This is a critical consequence of decentralization on ethnically divided societies suffering from the pressures of secessionism. This line of reasoning is informed by the development of an influential and superior social class at regional and local levels who seek greater autonomy but are compelled to adhere to the central government which reserves the power of control over the financial and natural resources required for self determination.<sup>98</sup> The actual implementation of decentralization devolves the management of these financial and natural resources to the regional and local authorities who consequently do not consider the devolution process as a governance platform for substantial regional development but as a provision of means to profile and enhance their political agenda of self determination. In recent times, academic research has given results which suggest that in impacting on national unity, decentralization does not reduce ethnic divergence and secessionism.<sup>99</sup> Rather it strengthens demands for greater autonomy by adding force and substance to sub-national ethnic identities. The foregoing analysis depict one dimension to the political consequences of decentralization in a country like Cameroon which is an ethnically fragmented state surviving under the pressures of secession by groups supposedly representing regional interests.

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<sup>97</sup> Kymlicka, Will: “*Is Federalism a Viable Alternative to Secessionism?*” in Percy B. Lehning, ed., *Theories of Secessionism* (New York: Routledge Press), 111-150, 1998.

<sup>98</sup> Kofele-Kale “Ethnicity, Regionalism and Political Power: A Post-mortem of Ahidjo’s Cameroon” in M Shatzberg and I Zartman (eds.), *The political Economy of Cameroon* (1986).

<sup>99</sup> Alesina A. & Spolaore E. (1997) “*On the number and size of nations*”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 112, MIT Press.

#### **4.2.2 Decentralization as a cure for national power struggles**

The demands for greater autonomy and self determination by the English-speaking minority in Cameroon cannot be dissociated from the desire of the regional population to participate and be represented in the national governing of the state. Around the world, marginalisation and political exclusion trigger many regional minorities and ethnic groups to clamour for autonomy and this has in several instances led to the rise of secessionist movements. One of the most outstanding cries of the Southern Cameroons National Council in Cameroon is Anglophone marginalisation and exclusion from political appointments within the central governing realms.<sup>100</sup> Although the veracity of this plight can be contested, this ground for secession put forward by the SCNC activists points to the fact that secessionist activity is very much linked to the desire by minorities to participate in the central government. These demands for participatory governance which often degenerate into secessionism can be curbed by decentralization. Decentralization does not yield to the regional demands for participation in the central government *per se* but it disperses power to the regions and eventually quenches the thirst for power which is the deep-seated cause of secessionism. In this way, decentralization is efficiently practiced in favour of national unity and at the same time within the prescribed framework of democracy and participatory governance.

#### **4.2.3 Achieving regional political stability through fiscal decentralization**

The operation and functioning of fiscal decentralization is another dimension in which decentralization can cure the internal fractions of a state. Regional income disparities largely contribute to the creation of fractions with the nation. In this regard, economically vibrant as well as economically retarded regions have the potential of developing secessionist tendencies. On the one hand, relatively rich and economically vibrant regions which are endowed with natural resources and an enterprising economic sector tend to develop a sense of self-sufficiency. This state of supposed self-sufficiency gives rise to politically oriented

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<sup>100</sup> Fombad C.M. (2008) “*Cameroon’s Constitutional Conundrum: Reconciling Unity with Diversity*”. Published in *Ethnicity, Human Rights and Constitutionalism in Africa* Page 121-156, The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists.

ideas that the region has resources enough to survive as an autonomous entity. Such regions consequently seek to break away from the central state. In Cameroon, the feelings of regional self-sufficiency and sustainability have greatly contributed to the development of demands for autonomy by the Southern Cameroons.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, economically retarded regions which are not endowed with very productive resources often suffer from neglect and consequent marginalisation from the central government. Central governments see no reason in investing in these regions. Coupled with the foregoing, regional inequalities and the need for an improved economic status ignite secessionist tendencies within such regions. In resolving these complexities, fiscal decentralization devolves the management of financial resources to regional and local levels consequently improving the economic situation of the regions concerned. In addition, central governments implement fiscal policies such as the distribution of equitable shares, conditional and unconditional grants to regions to ensure regional economic equilibrium. This results in the dismantling of secessionist activities and secession itself through decentralization. However, it is a valid argument to hold that the devolution of powers to regions which are relatively economically vibrant is a measure which increases the likelihood of demands for greater autonomy and eventual secession. In effect, the argument is that since fiscal decentralization can be considered as the first step down the slippery slope leading towards regional independence and eventually separation, countries wishing to avoid that outcome remain centralized.

#### **4.2.4 Decentralization as a strategy to reduce the strength and influence of regions**

The use of decentralization to create several provinces or regions and further splitting them into local municipalities largely reduces the force of the regions thereby undermining potential secessionist forces.<sup>102</sup> When ethnic groups which share a common history and face the same political and socio-economic challenges unite as a region, there is the creation of an organised body to represent and advance the interests of the ethnic groups. Besides the fact that the plight and concerns of the various ethnic groups become significant when put together, the financial, human and natural resources of these groups are also combined thus

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<sup>101</sup> See *Autonomy and Secession* (Chapter 3.2.3 of this paper).

<sup>102</sup> Richard B., Francois V. & Edison Roy-Cesar (2010) *Is Decentralisation Glue or Solvent for National Unity?* The Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University.



making them a formidable force in the struggle for autonomy or even secession. The existence of vibrant regions can therefore be subjectively considered as a potential danger to the unity of the state. Decentralization weakens regionalism, especially when the entire country is split into numerous entities, each claiming and consolidating its semi-autonomous status. This state of affairs gives the central government a unique opportunity to safeguard and deepen the roots of national unity.

#### **4.2.5 Decentralization as a peaceful political agreement for national unity**

The implementation of decentralization is a political agreement for reunification and national unity. Minority groups which develop into secessionist movements, most often, base their pressures on the demands for political recognition, socio-economic consideration and ultimately, democratic governance by central governments. When faced with these circumstances, negotiations, mediations and arbitrations usually involve the promise of decentralization by central governments as an agreement for reunification.<sup>103</sup> When decentralization is practiced under these circumstances, its outcome directly favours national unity. This argument is based on the view that the objective and institutional approach to decentralization are determinants of its political consequences. Of political consequence on the demands for greater autonomy, the practice of decentralization under these circumstances will not only be rejected by secessionists and groups demanding for more autonomy but will induce much more intense secessionist activities. The rationale behind this position is the fact that when decentralization is used as an inducement to keep regions within a country, the long term effects will not be different from those of a centralized structure. Decentralization should have as its primary objectives the welfare of citizens and not the consolidation of the political face of a nation.

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<sup>103</sup> Richard B., Francois V. & Edison Roy-Cesar (2010) *Is Decentralisation Glue or Solvent for National Unity?* The Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University.



#### **4.2.6 The extension of state constitutional and judicial influence through decentralization**

The constitutional and judicial control by the central government over the regions within a country is a critical dimension in which the political consequences of decentralization can be assessed. In decentralized democracies, regions as sub-national units which may be afforded certain degrees of autonomy but are expected to be subject to the national constitution which is usually the supreme national law applicable to both central and decentralized entities. In its most practical form, secessionist activity within regions manifests itself through the non-compliance of some national constitutional principles and other national legislation. The non-compliance to constitutional principles is an advanced stage of national disintegration and any nation seeking to consolidate national unity must ensure that regions and all other sub-national units operate under the legal boundaries of the constitution and other applicable national legislation. Decentralization legitimises constitutional compliance, extends the judicial authority of the central government, restores widespread confidence in the national legal system and consequently re-establishes the power and authority of the central government over the regions in favour of national unity. This is one of the lenses through which the implementation of decentralization in Cameroon can be viewed to be a strategy at consolidating and enhancing national unity. Little wonder the present process of decentralization in Cameroon is championed by the national government which simultaneously advocates for and champions the demands for greater national unity.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

To a great extent, Cameroon's practice of decentralization reflects the theoretical expectations of decentralization. As seen in the comparison of Cameroon's decentralization structure with the general theory, all the types of decentralization are found in Cameroon. There are three main points of convergence between the general theory and practice in Cameroon. Firstly, the constitutional and legislative provision for the election of regional and local authorities is a reflection of the general theory of political decentralization. Secondly, the practice of a system of administration wherein administrative competencies are

deconcentrated and handed out to lower levels of the central government ties with the theoretical expectations of administrative decentralization. Thirdly, the simultaneous transfer of competencies and resources to the regions is a reflection of the general theory of decentralization in the Cameroonian system. However there are major aspects where the Cameroonian structure of decentralization diverges from the general theory. With regards to national unity, the over supervision of decentralized entities by the central government is a major limitation to the proper practice of decentralization in Cameroon. This over supervision of decentralized entities by the central government degenerates into intervention and defeats the entire essence of decentralization. Furthermore, the appointment of regional governors to head decentralised entities is a major shortcoming in the practice of decentralization in Cameroon. These aspects of divergence coupled with the growing demands for greater autonomy and secession necessitate recommendations for a much more practical approach to the simultaneous practice decentralization and the promotion of national unity.



# Chapter V

## *Recommendations and Conclusion*

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### 5.1 Recommendations

In line with the debate around decentralization and national unity assessed above, the outcome of the relationship between both concepts is a function of the manner in which they are approached. Cameroon as a nation has the challenge to not only efficiently accommodate both concepts but to use decentralization as a mechanism to achieve national unity. On the one hand, the need to enhance national unity is of critical importance for ethnically divided nations such as Cameroon. On the other hand, decentralization is a vital strategy for nations seeking to improve the provision of basic services and to promote democracy. The following recommendations aim at devising ways in which decentralization can be used as a device to manage ethnic diversity without it constituting a threat to the political and territorial integrity of the state.<sup>104</sup> These recommendations are tested against the questions of: what problem relating to national unity the recommendations seek to address; why and how the current system is not addressing the problem; and how the recommendations will address that problem/issue.

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<sup>104</sup> Fessha Y T, "Institutional Recognition and Accommodation of Ethnic Diversity: Federalism in South Africa and Ethiopia". Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Law, University of the Western Cape, 9 June 2008.

### **5.1.1 National Unity should be defined in the Constitution**

For veritable national unity to be achieved and consolidated and for such an important concept to assume its status in the political profile of the nation, it should be entrenched in an instrument which gives it the status and protection the Cameroon people seek to grant it. The constitution is the highest law within Cameroons hierarchy of legal norms. It outlines and protects the fundamental values, freedoms and concepts of the nation and its people. It is therefore strongly recommended that the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon should be amended to include provisions which expressly define and include national unity into the class of constitutional values requiring national recognition and protection. This constitutional provision should consider a definition of national unity which steps beyond a unitary government and centrally oriented institutions. The sensitive concerns of ethnicity, regionalism and decentralized governance should constitute a major part of the determinants of the constitutional definition of national unity. As noted in the earlier sections of this paper<sup>105</sup>, there is not even one article or provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon that expressly defines or provides for national unity. Implicitly, national unity is vaguely guaranteed and advocated for in the Cameroonian context and consequently subjects it to various forms of interpretation and compromise. Should this recommendation be considered and effected by the entire Cameroonian nation, the unity of the nation will be afforded a status strong enough to resist the threats of secession and full regional autonomy. Furthermore, should national unity in Cameroon be constitutionalised, it will reduce the complexities, risks and challenges faced in the implementation of decentralization. This constitutes a valid and reasonable reconciliation to debate around decentralization and national unity.

### **5.1.2 The constitutional regulation of decentralization should limit national supervision of decentralized entities**

Within the framework of the central government and the state government seeking to earn the complete confidence of its citizens and the total allegiance of the regions, the Constitution of

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<sup>105</sup> See *Contemporary Cameroonian Experience* (Chapter 3.2.2 of this paper).

the Republic of Cameroon must set the basic rules and regulations governing supervision of decentralized, local collectivities. Supervision in the decentralization context particularly involves regulation, monitoring, support and intervention. Affording constitutional status and regulation of these four components of supervisions leaves the central government with a considerably comfortable extent of control over decentralized entities. To ensure that the implementation of decentralization achieves its primary and secondarily policy objectives, its regulation needs to be afforded constitutional status.

As at now, the foundation of the practice of decentralization in Cameroon is the Law No. 96/06 of 18/01/1996. However, a profound analysis of the constitutional provisions on decentralization<sup>106</sup> reveals that there is no clear-cut constitutional definition of the essential concept of national supervision from the undemocratic ill of improper interventions. This is because the constitution still refers this duty to the national legislation on decentralization which does not have the same legal force as the Constitution. On this basis, Cameroon's practice of decentralization is still subject to criticism and consequently not credible enough to win the confidence of regions or ethnic groups which have, in recent times, expressed dissatisfaction in the performance of the national government and the status of the entire Republic of Cameroon.<sup>107</sup> National supervision of regional and local authorities is an extent of the practice of decentralization which is very contentious and should therefore be expressly regulated by the constitution. With regards to the regulation and practice of national supervision over regional and local authorities, it is important to note that over-supervision and unregulated intervention unduly usurps the powers devolved to regions and local councils thereby defeating the entire essence of the process of decentralization. The need to cautiously watch over national supervision of local authorities is a particularly vital extent of decentralization and should therefore be clearly provided for by the constitution. This will largely contribute to both the effective practice of decentralization and the consolidation of national unity.

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<sup>106</sup> See *The Legal Regulation of Decentralization in Cameroon* (Chapter 3.3.1 of this paper).

<sup>107</sup> See *Autonomy and Secession* (Chapter 3.2.3 of this paper).

### 5.1.3 Horizontal Fiscal Decentralization and Conditional Grants

The devolution of competences and resources from the central government to the regional or local levels of government should not be limited to power sharing between national and local authorities.<sup>108</sup> At regional government level, the power of decision making and representation should be vested in the elected regional council which serves as the executive and legislative organ while the developmental competencies and the resources required for the execution of this developmental mandate should be devolved to the entire ensemble of role players in the sphere of government which includes the elected regional council, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, private sector service providers and ultimately the local communities. At municipal level, the decentralization of competencies and resources should not be limited to councils but to the other role players identified at regional level. In South Africa which is considered as an African country with an advanced decentralization structure<sup>109</sup>, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act describes a municipality as a composite entity, an organ of state consisting of three elements which include the municipal council; the municipal administration; and the community of the municipality.<sup>110</sup> Horizontal decentralization, therefore, involves the spread of powers, competencies and financial resources amongst the various role players at local government level. In this way, power and resources within the local sphere of government is not concentrated in one body thereby discouraging the use of devolved resources to enhance secessionism and extreme autonomy.

In the further use of horizontal decentralization to enhance national unity, the allocation of financial and material resources should be pegged to the human and developmental needs of the local communities. Conditional grants are used by several nations around the world to ensure that the financial resources which are granted to regions and local councils are used for the intended purpose. Conditional grants are used by national government to incorporate national

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<sup>108</sup> The devolution of power from the central government to local authorities is considered as vertical decentralization because the national government is generally considered as a superior level of government which reserves vast powers over decision making and the resources necessary for the implementation of decisions. Upon devolution to regional/local government, which are generally at a lower level of state hierarchy, there is a downward transfer of power thus the term vertical decentralization.

<sup>109</sup> *Political Decentralization in Africa: Experiences of Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa*. Discussion Paper by John-Mary Kauzya, Division for Public Administration and Development Management Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations New York. December 2007

<sup>110</sup> Section 2(b) of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, Republic of South Africa (referred to as the Systems Act)

priorities in municipal budgets.<sup>111</sup> Through the politics of conditional grants, the promotion of national unity as a national priority can be incorporated into the municipal agenda in Cameroon. Furthermore, the tagging of the need to address service delivery backlogs and regional disparities in municipal infrastructure, gives the government of Cameroon an opportunity to implement decentralization without the fear of national disintegration. In Cameroon, FEICOM is the organ of state charged with the implementation of the fiscal dimension to decentralization. FEICOM acts as a communal bank for local government in Cameroon and the resources provided by FEICOM amount to approximately 80% of the overall revenues of local authorities in rural areas.<sup>112</sup> The mandate, role and functioning of this institution should be expressly extended to make use of conditional grants. Fiscal decentralization is the backbone to the effective and efficient practice of decentralization and can therefore be accurately used to enhance the achievement of national priorities and policy objectives.

#### **5.1.4 Local government should be accountable to both the citizens and the central government.**



The accountability and thorough transparency of decentralized entities is a necessary reform which must be considered by any government contemplating, designing or implementing decentralization. Local government accountability in this regard is different from public accountability as a tenet of good governance.<sup>113</sup> The insistence of local government accountability to both the citizens and the central government is an operational mechanism to ensure that decentralized authorities are answerable to their communities and electorate considering the fact that decisions made by the former directly affect the latter. This is in response to the *raison d'être* of decentralization. Simultaneously, local government accountability to the central government is a guarantee of national unity after decentralization. Decentralized entities in Cameroon remain organs of state and should be bound by the laws, policies and mechanisms put in place to stamp out corruption from the

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<sup>111</sup> Nico Steytler and Jaap DeVisser (2009) *Local Government Law of South Africa*, Issue 2, Lexis Nexis Butterworths.

<sup>112</sup> Soren D. (2007) "Local Government and Decentralization in Cameroon" in *Local Government Bulletin*. Volume 9, Issue 2.

<sup>113</sup> See Chapter 2.2 of this paper on *The Principles of Good Governance as a Universal Standard of State Administration*.

Cameroonian administration and public service. The financial records of decentralized entities should be subject to auditing by the Supreme State Control and the Audit Bench of the Supreme Court which ensure accountability and transparency in public administration at all spheres of government. By reserving the right to audit and supervise the financial management of regional and local authorities, the central government indirectly guards against the secessionist tendencies which may develop within certain regions as a result of the powers and resources which accrue from political and fiscal decentralization.

### **5.1.5 Definition of functional and legislative competences.**

The extent to which regional and municipal authorities can use decentralization to undermine national unity largely depends on the nature and scope of powers, competence and resources afforded them. The primary essence of decentralization is to ensure a participatory and democratic approach to state administration thereby guaranteeing efficient and reliable service provision, socio-economic development and the ultimate well-being of citizens. In this regard, local government should be charged with functions directly related to service delivery and socio-economic well being of the society such as water provision and sanitation, electricity, tourism, public health, basic education, local transport, refuse removal, local public works and trading regulations.<sup>114</sup> Regional and local authorities should not be afforded executive and legislative power over sensitive areas such as security and international affairs. The handing of such powers to local authorities is the bedrock for demands for greater autonomy and eventual secession. Furthermore, the executive and legislative powers of regional and local authorities should be exercised concurrently with the central government. The central government, through supervision should reserve the right to overrule on issues which directly affect national interest, national security and territorial sovereignty of the nation, the adherence to constitutional values, the promotion of public law and order. The Prime Ministerial decrees signed by on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010 are the first generation of functional competencies transferred from the state to the local councils which outline and cover the functional areas of local government in Cameroon.

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<sup>114</sup> In this regard, it is important to see Schedule 4B and 5B of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996 which lists the functional areas of local government.



## 5.2 General Conclusion

The political outcomes of decentralization on national unity are a function of the relationship which exists between both concepts. As examined in this paper, when a state conforms to the general theory of decentralization and the principles of good governance, to a large extent, it reduces the intensity of the demands for greater autonomy and even secession. This view is based on the reasoning that bad and undemocratic governance fuels secessionist tendencies. Eventually, democratic and good governance through decentralization is a means of inducing regions to stay within a nation. In describing Cameroon's practice of decentralization and its national unity experience, this paper reveals the extent to which the state has had to accommodate both concepts in its administrative and political spheres. An assessment of the debate around national unity and decentralization points to certain aspects of convergence and divergence between Cameroon's decentralization structure and the general theory. The supervision of decentralized entities and the appointment of regional administrators are two major aspects where Cameroon's decentralization structure diverges from the general theory. However, all the types of decentralization are provided for and practiced in Cameroon. This is a major area where the practice of decentralization in Cameroon conforms to the general theory.

The main conclusion that emerges from this paper is that the political consequence of decentralization on national unity is a function of the objective, dimension and circumstances under which decentralization is practiced. The preservation of national unity in Cameroon is one of the priorities of a central state administration which is prevalently criticized and challenged for its inability to respond to the dire needs of its citizens. Public opinion suggests that the current drive towards decentralization is not necessarily the beginning of a new era of constitutional democracy, but rather another episode of the long and backbreaking process of political transformation.<sup>115</sup> The deep cultural, linguistic and economic split of the country have continued to be at the heart for secessionist tendencies. If national unity is the final goal,

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<sup>115</sup> Fombad C.M. (2008) "*Cameroon's Constitutional Conundrum: Reconciling Unity with Diversity*". Published in *Ethnicity, Human Rights and Constitutionalism in Africa* Page 121-156. The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists.

Cameroon must not, “overshoot” with respect to decentralization for “the pendulum may break before it can swing back”<sup>116</sup>.

Nonetheless, the success or failure of secessionist movements is largely a product of the rules governing the process of state administration and the ways in which interaction between the central government and the regional government is conducted. In this regard, the economic disparity between regions breeding secession and the entire nation is crucial. If regions are given a more free hand in the access and allocation of their revenue potential, they may be happy to stay with the nation in respect of national unity. However, if the rules of the game restrict them from economic self determination, there is a high tendency for regions to readily exploit any attempts at decentralization in favour of the drive towards full autonomy thereby harming national unity.

The objectives and dimensions of decentralization, as applied by nations, are a fundamental determinant of the political outcome of the process. If decentralization is conceived, designed and implemented as an instrument of people empowerment, a platform for sustainable democratization, a structure for the mobilization of resources for economic development, a veritable instrument of reconciliation, social integration and well-being in a society “plagued” by ethnic division, and a vehicle for the promotion of a culture of political, economic, civic, and administrative good governance.<sup>117</sup> The present day situation in Cameroon is favourable for the use of decentralization as an efficient mechanism in the consolidation of national unity because, as noted by Bird, Vaillancourt, and Roy-César, the impact of decentralization depends not only upon the details of what is done but also the specific context and time when it is done.<sup>118</sup> Against this backdrop, the introduction and implementation of decentralization reforms in Cameroon will not only enhance the reconstruction of the national socio-economic and political fabric, it will catalyze social reconciliation, restore the lost confidence in regime in power and ultimately shore up Cameroonian national unity.

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<sup>116</sup> Bird, Vaillancourt & Roy-Cesar, (2010).

<sup>117</sup> John-Mary Kauzya (2005), *Decentralization: Prospects for Peace, Democracy and Development*. Division for Public Administration and Development Management United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Discussion Paper. United Nations, New York.

<sup>118</sup> Richard B., Francois V. & Edison Roy-Cesar (2010) *Is Decentralisation Glue or Solvent for National Unity?* The Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University. Page 1.

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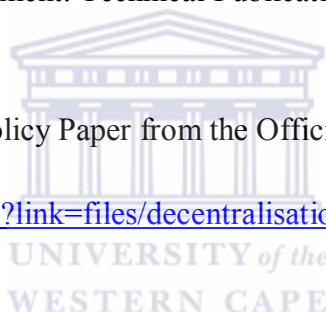
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