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State Versus Ethnic Identification in Tibati, Cameroon

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A Capstone Paper

By

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Pour Jessica: tu est ma raison d'etre, je t'aime plus que paix mondial.

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Introduction

      The purpose of this paper is to analyze state versus ethnic identification among residents of Tibati, Cameroon, and to question whether identification suggests the existence of tribalism. This study explores how residents of Tibati who more strongly identify with their ethnic group than the state are more likely to express dissatisfaction with the Cameroonian government, using information collected through informal conversations about the level of satisfaction of Tibatians with regards to both their ethnic group and the Cameroonian government.

      This paper provides a synopsis of the major ethnic groups in Tibati and a brief historical summary of Cameroonian state evolution from its independence in 1960 to the present day. Using research gleaned through observation and conversation, this paper

will reflect upon the political and ethnic sentiments of a mid-sized Cameroonian village one year before its scheduled presidential election, to be held in 2011.

As a capstone paper is to be reflective of Peace Corps service, I will use both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection throughout this study, attempting to balance first-person accounting with statistical data. This paper will lean on personal experiences and observation as well as scholarly works. The finished product will, hopefully, provide the reader with an understanding of the challenges that face development workers in countries such as Cameroon, where promotion of state development can become tangled with the preservation and progress of specific ethnic groups. Two ethnic groups - the Fulbe and Mbororo people - will be detailed specifically as they represent the majority throughout the Grand North and have a history of regional political dominance.

I will discuss two projects that took place during my first year in Tibati. The first project, an HIV/AIDS education campaign aimed at the creation of a network of peer-educators, is being considered a success, for reasons I will delve into subsequently. The second project, the creation of a community-based water pump committee charged with raising necessary funds for construction costs of a new communal water pump, ended unsuccessfully for reasons that will also be addressed later on in the paper.

Since achieving independence, the political evolution of the Cameroonian state has been reminiscent of the growing pains endured by many other African states in the decades following the end of the colonial period. Cameroon has had its own unique

political history, which will be discussed throughout this paper.

Brief Political History of Cameroon

Known as "Little Africa" for encapsulating climates and ecosystems across the entire continent (desert, rainforest, mountains and savannah) the country of Cameroon is located on the West African coast, just north of the equator. Cameroon borders the countries of Equatorial New Guinea, Gabon and Congo to its south, Chad and the Central African Republic to its north and east, and Nigeria to its west. With a population of 18.8 million, Cameroon is slightly larger than the U.S. State of California in terms of landmass, with approximately 183,000 square miles (Amin 1992).

Cameroon consists of ten regions, each with its own prefecture, religious and other governing officials. The Adamaoua, southernmost region of Cameroon's Grand North, straddles north and south, and is an amalgamation of the country's three distinct cultures: that of the Grand North, Grand South (Francophone areas both) and the Anglophone Western region. Ngaoundere, the capital of the Adamaoua region, is the terminus of Cameroon's railway system, which acts as a locus for commerce and provides the only "reliable" means of transportation between the Grand North and Grand South. The Adamaoua is the second-least populous region in Cameroon, with large swathes of untrammeled wilderness and yet-to-be-exploited natural resources. After centuries of sustained civilization, Cameroon was discovered by the Portuguese in 1472, who christened the area "Rio dos Camaroes" or "River of Prawns." Cameroon was a German

protectorate until after WWI, whereafter the League of Nations mandated shared

administration to Britain and France.

The French Cameroonian decolonization process of the early 1950s saw

unsuccessful uprisings among the Bassa and Bamileke peoples, led by the Union des

Populations du Cameroun (UPC). When Ahmadou Ahidjo came to power as the French-

appointed Premier in 1958, the UPC continued its struggle for greater autonomy and was

harshly pacified by both the French and the new Cameroonian government. In 1961 a

referendum was held to determine the future for the Anglophone regions of the country.

The Northwest favored annexation to Nigeria, while the Southwest voted to remain part

of Cameroon, however the end result found both countries operating in an area of semi-

autonomy, considered the state of West Cameroon, a political entity lasting until 1966

following the merging of the major political parties between the two states. In 1972 - in

an effort to contain mounting dissatisfaction from Anglophone regions - Ahidjo signed

off on a new constitution, which explicitly abolished the creation of separate state

institutions and created a centralized administration. (Yenshu 2003).

Ahidjo was reelected for another five year term in 1975 - running unopposed - and

appointed Paul Biya as his prime minister the same year. Despite criticisms that the

Ahidjo administration had become an autocracy, the president won reelection - again

unchallenged - in 1980. Cameroon saw its first president resign for reasons of health in

1982, a move that transfered power into the hands of Paul Biya, who has ruled as

president ever since, though not without accusations of voting irregularities including

gerrymandering and political thuggery (ACHPR 2002). Additional information about the political evolution of Cameroon will be covered in subsequent sections.

It is worth mentioning that Ahidjo was of Fulbe descent, a point reflected in the elite status enjoyed by Fulbe over his two-decade presidency. Massive public works projects were undertaken throughout the Grand North during these years - especially in the North Region capital of Garoua - however once Ahidjo had fallen from power the funding was cut off and redirected to the Grand South. I believe this sense of pride - especially throughout the Grand North, where Ahidjo was born and rose to eminence - still very much exists in the mindset of rank and file Fulbe, and is double-edged in its usefulness to the Fulbe people in terms of development.

The Peace Corps in Cameroon

Founded by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, the Peace Corps was founded with the intent to send American men and women into developing countries to assist with development. The organization was to promote goodwill and forge bonds of mutual respect and understanding between the United States and the developing world at the height of the Cold War. As with almost all development organizations, there have been both supporters and critics of the Peace Corps throughout its lifespan. Some herald the organization as the embodiment of the American spirit of generosity while others consider it an organization comprised entirely of starry-eyed naive peaceniks whose efforts only aid and abet corrupt, do-nothing governments. At the time of this writing

there are many residents of Tibati who believe that the Peace Corps is, in actuality, a wing of the Central Intelligence Agency or some other American cloak-and-dagger type agency. I believe the truth lies somewhere in the middle (except for the CIA part.) Peace Corps can, under the right circumstances, operate as a productive international development agency, bringing hope and assisting in breaking the cycle of poverty that exists in the majority of countries where the organization currently operates. Without getting too far ahead of myself, I will address the positive and negative organizational aspects of Peace Corps Cameroon more directly in a later section of this paper. Like any entity that strives to better the public, constant scrutiny and revision is essential to keep the institution viable.

Peace Corps volunteers first arrived to Cameroon in 1962 at the behest of the Cameroonian government. At the time of this writing, a total of more than 2,700 Americans have served as volunteers in Cameroon, with the organization operating for 47 consecutive years, which one may or may not consider to be a point of pride. Four projects exist, each overseen by an associate director of operations. These projects include: agroforestry, health education, small enterprise development and education. During the years of my service (2008-2010) there were around 140 volunteers working in all ten of Cameroon's regions, with an annual operating budget of about three million dollars (Peace Corps 2008).

Rise of the Fulbe

Historians believe that the Fulbe peoples' origins derive from either the Middle

East or North Africa; herdsmen who drove their livestock south in search of greener pastures, establishing temporary settlements while rearing children and cattle along the way. Other scholars pinpoint the area of Fuuta Toro, found in the valley of the Senegal River, as the starting point for the Fulbe. What is undisputed is that the Fulbe controlled wide swaths of highlands across present-day Guinea, Mali, Burkina-Faso, northern Nigeria and northern Cameroon, where large numbers of cattle were shuffled from one grazing area to the next as the nomadic herdsmen struggled to keep themselves viable in the harsh climate of the Sahel region (Burnham 1996).

After a steady migration period to Lake Chad between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Fulbe began to adhere to the Islamic law of Sharia. Faced with continual subjugation at the hands of non-Muslims, unrest fomented. The Fulbe regarded the ruling ethnicities as inferior, both in cultural and religious conviction. It is held that the Fulbe conquest of northern Cameroon commenced in the early nineteenth century. Under the leadership of Usman dan Fodio, the Fulbe organized a jihad against neighboring pagan populations for the purposes of constructing an Islamic state (Burnham 1996). The superiority of the Fulbe military, as well as the fractured tribal opposition, led to a near-complete dominance over northern Cameroon. Once in power, the Fulbe perpetuated their stranglehold over the region through annual forced tributes of slaves and other valuable goods, strengthening their legitimacy while marginalizing other ethnic minorities from the political process (Gausset 1998).

Mbororo

The Mbororo people are technically of Fulbe descent, yet exercise a culture different enough to warrant their own sectional title. It is possible to accuse the present-day "Fulbe" as the group that has undergone the greatest transformation and therefore are more deserving of a new title while the Fulbe were traditionally nomadic herdsmen, centuries of settlements and changing economic habits have created a cleft in Fulbe-Mbororo relations; the Mbororo continue to exist as herdsmen, as the Fulbe steadily occupied positions of political power throughout Cameroon's Grand North.

Tensions between Fulbe and Mbororo have increased with population density, with land-use disputes erupting between Fulbe farmers and Mbororo herdsmen. In general, the Fulbe regard their Mbororo cousins with a certain amount of disdain, critical of Mbororo customs considered outmoded as well as perceived inattention to sharia, Islamic law. In Tibati, this separation is acknowledged, if tacitly, by the population. Mbororo men and women fulfill needed roles but are not accepted into the community proper. The designation of "outcast" is certainly a stretch, however in terms of hierarchical orientation, the Mbororo are considered second-class citizens both in Tibati and beyond (Burnham 1996).

Today, the Mbororo of Cameroon's Grand North share in the same agricultural tradition of herding cattle for profit, with others serving as merchants and living in towns, though the intermingling of Mbororo and other ethnic groups is a rarity in the village of Tibati. Mbororo have strikingly unique physical characteristics that, when coupled with

traditional dress, make their identification an incredibly simple process. Members of this group tend to be taller and slimmer than others. They have narrow noses and a much lighter skin pigmentation, which ethnographers have mistaken as a sign of Arabic descent.

In Cameroon, the Mbororo practice of transhumance continues to clash with the state's preference for fixed agriculture; when Mbororo herd their cattle across the countryside, in an effort to minimize overgrazing, there have been cases when the Cameroonian government has reallocated their lands to other farmers. Herdsmen are routinely fined by government officials for herding cattle through traditional transhumance zones, underscoring the absence of communication between Mbororo and the Cameroonian government. The MBOSCUDA (Mbororo Socio-Cultural and Development Association), a Cameroonian organization of Mbororo pastoralists founded in 1992 has expressed concern over what they consider to be institutionalized bias and a larger government effort to dismantle their traditional cultural and economic customs (IPACC, 2009). As Lake Chad continues to shrink, through over-exploitation and climate change, delegates at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues have acknowledged the disproportionately negative impact on traditional fishermen and farmers, however as of this writing, little action has been taken by the Cameroonian government to address this period of uninterrupted marginalization.

Conflict in Chad and the Central African Republic has pushed Mbororo refugees into Cameroon, threatening lives, cattle, property and the Mbororo culture. At first

glance, the idea that a traditionally nomadic people could ever become displaced refugees seems ironic, yet the Mbororo perhaps run the greatest risk of being locked into eternal refugee status, as their lack of political representation allows the state to passively neglect their rights and needs. Problems continue for the Mbororo, who continue to suffer harassment at the hands of bandits operating between the Adamaoua and East Regions of Cameroon and bordering CAR. The International Federation of the Red Cross reported "almost weekly" assaults, kidnappings and robberies of Mbororo refugees between the years of 2004-2007.

The existing disconnect between Mbororo and the Cameroonian government resembles the Australian government's approach to its indigenous population. Both Mbororo and the "Bushmen" of Australia share numerous similarities: an undereducated population without legitimate political representation who, by all accounts, is at best ignored and, at worst, excluded or persecuted for their perceived backwardness.

Current Ethnic & Political Landscape

Before beginning a study of ethnic identification, it would be useful to determine what constitutes "ethnicity." Weber describes ethnic groups as a segment of the population who:

> *"entertain a subjective belief in their common descent - because of similarities of physical type or of custom or of both, or because of memories of migration - in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of non-kinship, communal kinship relationship... regardless of whether an objective blood relationship exists or not"* (Weber 1965).

Cameroon is one of the most ethnically diverse countries on the planet, with over 200 recognized ethnic groups present, depending on the source. While ethnic diversity provides challenges to the development and growth of a state, it also makes a state more impervious to civil war, one of the chief deterrents to economic growth and, by extension, development. Some of the very same developmentally limiting aspects of ethnic diversity in Cameroon - the unwillingness or inability to reach consensus and the undisguised tribalism which on the national scale splinters political opposition so greatly that electoral change becomes an impossibility - also safeguards against issues faced by states with ethnic dominance, or those with only a handful of ethnic groups. The consolidation of power into the hands of just a few groups is all but impossible in a place as ethnically diverse as Cameroon; in addition, the practice of reassigning appointed political figures to serve in areas where their ethnic group is in the minority is commonly practiced by the Biya administration, which fears ethnocentricity as a potential vehicle of its own displacement from power.

Statistically, African states with ethnic dominance are more at risk for civil war (Collier 2007). This is because, it could be argued, that when enough people with common ancestry find themselves in positions of authority, capable of bestowing patronage and gerrymandering the political process, power becomes consolidated, promoting tribalism. When affronted members of differing ethnicity become organized enough to push back - as typified in the ethnically-fueled Rwandan genocide in the early 1990s - the preponderance for violent retribution becomes possible.

The wheels of change turn slowly in any democracy with an adequate system of checks and balances; it is impossible for a president to ram through legislation in a politically diverse congress and, therefore, a consensus-seeking political system is wrought. In "broken" or "managed" democracies, consensus is not sought, as it does not need to be. This is the same in autocracies, where the will of the exalted one is law. While Cameroon is ethnically diverse, it is sorely lacking in viability of political choice. In the most recent National Assembly Election, held in 2007, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC) - the party of President Biya - trounced four competing parties by winning 153 out of a possible 180 seats. The next Presidential election, which is scheduled for 2011, will once again feature Paul Biya, and barring any catastrophic political occurrence he will handily win reelection. With the Assembly and Presidency operating as one entity, the state of Cameroon is effectively being run as a dictatorship, and an inefficient one at that. Cameroon is, relative to African standards, rich in natural resources, especially when compared to the adjacent states of Chad and the Central African Republic. This should be considered a blessing, however when analyzing research compiled by economist Paul Collier (among others) with regards to ethnically diverse democratic states, the window of development becomes smaller and, in actuality, these very same resources can become a liability for economic growth. I would argue that this is the case for Cameroon; the existence of resources has sustained the Biya administration, for without the incentive of the international private sector to assist in the development of Cameroon's infrastructure and job creation, the corrupt ineptitude of the

government would have resulted in its collapse.

Looking regionally, imposed segregation does not exist in Tibati or anywhere else in Cameroon, however it is clear that ethnic groups cluster according to lineage, certainly a non-phenomenal observation. Tibatians are no different from American Latinos, Asians, African-Americans or Caucasians; more often than not members of ethnic groups find greater kinship among peoples with shared histories and, thus, are more likely to reside in pockets. The intangible, unspoken comfort witnessed in verbal and non-verbal exchanges between fellow Haoussa or Baya, as two examples, illustrated this point. Greeting and conversing with someone in their tribal patois is seen as a sign of respect, a reality acknowledged and taken advantage of when it promoted the interests of projects.

Hostility amongst ethnic groups has a long history in Cameroon, with the most recent flare-up occurring less than a decade ago 250 kilometers east of Tibati, in the town of Meiganga, where Fulbe and Baya clashed violently for causes still not completely understood. Casualties incurred on both sides of the ethnic divide. The conflict flared out almost as quickly as it had begun and life quickly reverted back to normal, with accounts as to which group emerged victorious differing greatly.

It is understood that civil war erodes the economic capacity of a country, and while Cameroon is suffering due to the ineptitude and corruption of the Biya administration it has remained intact since its inception, unlike many of Cameroon's neighbors. It is often easier to overthrow a government than to make it work properly, though it is difficult to predict what sort of state Cameroon would resemble were Biya removed from office

through popular uprising. The Cameroonian people have never known honest

democracy, shifting from colonial rule to the managed autocracy of today and, as such,

would have a difficult time at creating a representative government, given the

overwhelming diversity and underlying tribalism. Cameroonians, regardless of ethnicity,

are frustrated and exhausted with the blatant disrespect they receive from their

government, however the opposition is leaderless and, therefore, directionless.

Stratification of Government

Cameroon is divided into ten separate regions (though were referred to as

"provinces" until late-2008.) They include: Extreme North, North, Adamaoua, Littoral,

East, Central, West, South, Northwest and Southwest (the final two regions comprising

Anglophone Cameroon, the former British colonies.) While perhaps lacking in creativity,

the names make finding each region easy on the map, and illustrate how professionally

segmented the country actually is.

Maneuvering through the twisty bureaucracy of Cameroonian politics is not

dissimilar from the American administrative structure; however the model is far less

abashed towards open displays of political corruption than our own. Each region has its

own governor, who is appointed by the president. Regions are comprised of districts,

each of which has its own "prefet" and "sous-prefet," whom are appointed by the

region's governor. The "prefet," who acts something like a "mini-governor", is

responsible for appointment of delegates to each ministry within the district. The "sous-

prefet" acts as assistant mini-governor. Imagine every possible public sector responsibility you can: for every one there is a corresponding ministry. Electricity and water, primary education, promotion of women and families, girls empowerment, public works, sanitation, agriculture, small business development, transportation, employment, etc. These midlevel bureaucrats each command a modest annual budget and are tasked with keeping the government gears grinding.

Just like in American bureaucracy, there is mismanagement, waste and corruption, however the extent of the negative is far more damaging to the lives of the Cameroonian people, as indicated in the near non-existence of basic services. There is no organized garbage collection or recycling programs for the majority of the country, roads are dilapidated and routinely impassable during the rainy season, which lasts anywhere between three to six months each year. Running water exists only in major cities; electricity enjoys greater availability, though interruptions in service are commonplace.

Data Collection & Limitations

This study faced a serious number of limitations from the outset: namely that the researcher was a Caucasian foreigner with limited conversational capacity in the national language (French) and completely incapable of speaking any of the numerous ethnic patois (Fulfulde, Baya, Haoussa, Mboum, Kole, etc.) Each of these limitations singularly would make conducting social research difficult; together, it must be acknowledged, created a situation where the reliability of research data is questionable. The challenges

that accompanied these limitations are obvious and will only be touched upon here briefly.

First, the issue of language proved to be not only detrimental to this study, but to my work as a volunteer in total. Failure to adequately clarify *what* was the purpose of this research ultimately proved to be a deal-breaker on countless occasions. Concerns over anonymity and fear of reprisals more often than not trumped conversation with a bearded stranger about identification to ethnicity and state. As mentioned in the section on the history of Peace Corps in Cameroon, many Tibatians were (and continue to be) convinced that our presence was somehow correlated to either an American or Cameroonian intelligence agency, or perhaps both.

Cameroonian history, like the histories of many African states, is dominated by European slave trading and colonialism. Some residents of Tibati lived in Cameroon during its period as a French protectorate, which undoubtedly affected their responses to questions by a Caucasian male. In a country where the overwhelming majority of foreigners represent either missionaries or aid agencies, with a small number of big game hunters and international investors, it is not difficult to understand the level of mistrust that has carried over since the official terminus of Cameroon's colonial period. My "whiteness" was detrimental in encouraging dialogue and it could be argued that even those who did agree to exchange views were hesitant to reveal their true feelings about the topics covered.

Data Analysis

The data for this study was collected from conversations with residents of Tibati as to whether they identified more strongly with their ethnic group, or with the State of Cameroon. The residents of Tibati were all encountered in a public setting.

The key question of identification I was interested in exploring was: "Do you feel more strongly connected to your ethnic group or the state of Cameroon?" During the conversations, other questions were raised regarding more specific feelings with respect to their ethnic group and the state.

Gender

Through conversations with fellow volunteers as well as observations in Tibati and beyond, it is evident that a woman's daily toil lasts many more hours per day than men, being most often confined within the household due to the amount of work necessary to care for a home and large family. Six to ten children per family is commonplace; as an extreme example, the father of a Tibati acquaintance, has three wives and has reared 22 children at the time of this writing. Although he is currently in his mid-eighties, his younger wives could conceivably still conceive.

Ethnicity

Unsurprisingly, the majority of people I talked to identified as Fulbe, more than the following two ethnic groups combined, which were Mboum and Baya . Boute and

Haoussa rounded off the top five most represented ethnic groups. The remaining ethnicities - seventeen different groups all told - comprised a small number. The fact that I was able to talk to people from 22 different ethnic groups underscores the diversity of Cameroon as a whole, as well as the challenge of finding commonality of interest over such a wide ethnic swath.

When parsed out according to the top three represented ethnic groups (Fulbe, Mboum and Baya, respectively), the results of my observations reveal some interesting contrasts amongst these peoples. Beginning with the Fulbe, more than half selected ethnic group as their identification, with a third for the state. Based on observational data and conversations with Fulbe residents of Tibati, as well as upon their historical dominance until the resignation of President Ahidjo, it is not surprising that these people consider their ethnicity with a strong amount of pride. I would argue that if the same Tibati residents who responded "state" were questioned more directly about the Biya administration, contrasted with Ahidjo as a way of establishing a retroactive job approval rating, it would reveal that their idea of "state" is neither inclusive nor supportive of Paul Biya's presidency. In essence, Fulbe are prideful of the Cameroon of the 1960's and 70's, when the country was being run by a member of their own tribe.

Mboum participants were split down the middle, half identifying with their ethnic group and half state. Like the Fulbe, Baya participants more strongly identified with their ethnicity (approximately half) than the state (about one-quarter). Interestingly, a third of Baya people provided no response to this question, an enormous percentage for which I

have no informed explanation.

Strength of Ethnic Group Identification

I asked participants to indicate how strongly they identified with their ethnic group, with responses highlighting the intense attachment Tibatians have with their ethnic group. Around three-fourths of responses were along the lines of "strong" attachment, contrasted with only a few people providing anything resembling a "weak" attachment.

Strength of State Identification

Only about a third of Tibatians I spoke with displayed a strong identification toward the state. In contrast to "ethnic identification", this shows the intensity of disconnect Tibatians feel toward the state of Cameroon. Considering Cameroon's history of political repression, it is reasonable to assert that Tibatians would have felt compelled to rate their identification toward state higher, fearing retribution. A similar case could be argued for "ethnic identification", however observational data and interviews conducted throughout the course of my first year in Tibati suggest otherwise. I have found overall that Tibatians are far more distrustful and fearful of their government than members of their ethnic group, for understandable reasons when one reflects upon the harsh political tactics employed by the Biya administration following the contested elections of 1992 and 1997. I was told by a number of Tibatians that the RDPC only visits Tibati during the run-up to an election, when party members will give sacks of rice,

flour and bars of soap to villagers in an effort to curry favor. Perhaps even most tragic is the willingness of some Tibatians - citizens who despise the Biya administration and speak out virulently about the state of Cameroonian politics behind closed doors - to appear supportive of the RDPC: wearing its traditional garb, handing out favorable literature, parading around in the annual celebratory events, all because those who participate receive a small amount of money by party members.

In short, only a small percentage of Tibatians displayed honest identification toward the RDPC - which, for all intents and purposes, is the state - raising questions about the feasibility of partnership between the international community and the Cameroonian government. And, as a Peace Corps volunteer who is considered a guest of the state, how is it possible to work with a population that is turned off from its government? And, furthermore, how can honest development work take place in a country where disconnect between citizen and state is so pronounced?

Confidence in Ethnic Group versus Cameroonian Government

Of the people I talked to, approximately two thirds have strong confidence in their ethnic group, and less than ten percent with weak confidence. Similarly, one third has strong confidence in the state government, and one third weak confidence. Overall, my impression from talking to the people of Tibati is that they have a bias favoring their ethnic group over the Cameroonian government in terms of confidence.

I believe, by and large, that the people of Tibati took the issue of "confidence" to

mean trustworthiness. Their responses paint an unfavorable picture for the amount of trust Cameroonians place within their government. Undoubtedly, some likely reflected upon perceived slights and moments of generosity from members of their shared ethnicity, while others viewed the question as more of a referendum on the government's inability or unwillingness to address the systemic poverty that exists in Tibati.

Identification

When I asked people the question "Do you have a stronger identification with your ethnic group or to the state of Cameroon?" approximately half indicated their ethnic group, and about one third indicated the State of Cameroon. These responses reinforce the overall impression of my observations: Cameroonians are more likely to identify with, and have confidence in, their ethnic group versus the state.

As touched upon in the *Strength of State Identification*, I believe that taking the time to study and question the dichotomy between state and ethnic identification provided my projects with a more personal understanding of the sentiments of the average Tibatian, with respect to their government and, by extension, its efforts at development. What I discovered, which will be covered further in a concluding section of this paper, is that ethnocentrism was not a strong enough deterrent to preclude my engagement with the community as a whole. Tibatians wanted what was best for the community, and would accept help from any person or organization - regardless of ethnicity - if it was promising a better tomorrow.

Project One: Education Campaigns

During the first year of service, my counterpart Abdoul Sattari and I quickly established working relationships with two institutions that might have more in common with one another than obvious at first glance. Several projects were conducted with students at the Bilingual High School and convicts at the Tibati Correctional Center, each with their own challenges and successes.

Tibati Correctional Center

Within the second or third month, we had begun to teach weekly business classes at the Tibati Correctional Center that were reasonably well received, which is to say neither of us were shanked and the student attendance was consistent. The average number of prisoners floats around 100 at any given time, and while specific charges were never inquired about, it was established that petty crimes - mostly theft and assault - were par for the course. The population of the Greater Tibati area is approximately 35,000, and so 100 prisoners might appear disproportionate, however the prison actually served the entirety of the District Djerem, which includes the large city of Ngaoundal.

While working in the prison, it was surprising to see such a large number of Baya, who are not a major ethnic group in Tibati. Working with this preliminary observation, it appeared that there was an ethnic bias against the Baya, or that the Baya were disproportionately turning to criminal activity for some reason, or that they were simply

terrible criminals. This apparent overrepresentation of Baya proved itself out once it was

discovered that the prison population included Ngaoundal, which is majority Baya.

The class met each Thursday - preferably before the sun had a chance to start

injuring people - using the Peace Corps designed "12-Week Business Course," which

has been employed by Small Enterprise Development volunteers with positive results.

Without dwelling too long on the nuts and bolts of the class work itself, we were

pleasantly surprised at the sustained level of interest on the part of the students, and were

encouraged to plan further sessions. During the first week it became apparent that

external funding would be needed, as the students were without pens, notebooks, chalk or

a chalkboard, so we presented the project to the Lamido of Tibati who graciously agreed

to fund the effort. Although the sum was quite small - only around eighty USD - the

Lamido could have just as easily given the brush-off.

It might be helpful here to provide a better description of life inside the correctional

center: The prison is one large structure, shaped like a brick and equally as inviting as a

prospective living space. Upon entering, one is faced with an open courtyard around 20 x

100 feet in area. This space is mixed-use, invisibly compartmentalized into spaces for

cooking, praying, clothes-washing and drying, general horseplay, a barbershop and, in

our case, a classroom. Along the same wall as the entrance, there is a water pump

adjacent to an unsanitary bathroom and showers, two rooms with concrete floors and

drainage holes. Across the courtyard are three sleeping chambers, where the men are

forced to lie pressed up against one another due to the severity of overcrowding. The dry

season converts the main courtyard into an open-air sleeping area, though during the rainy season (extending from late-April until early-November) the prisoners are without this option. Realistically the prison houses forty men, though as mentioned above this number is always more than double and sometimes triple capacity. A 2002 study conducted by the African Commission on Human Rights reported a nation-wide prison overcrowding rate exceeding 450% its planned capacity. In Douala, the prison was built to house 182 inmates, holding 2,396. The central prison of Yaounde was no better, holding 3,059 persons with a planned capacity of 870 (ACHPR 2002). Though this study is eight years old, the inhumane conditions found in Cameroonian prisons continues.

The reasons for overcrowding in Cameroonian prisons are similar to those in the American system: inadequate funding for facility expansion, trivial crimes leading to prison sentences and an overstretched judiciary unable to keep pace with processing paperwork in either a professional or timely manner. Individual prisoners commonly become lost in the system and without adequate funds and pressure by external forces end up trapped in the prison months, sometimes even years, longer than their original sentence. The International Center for Prison Studies reported that Cameroon had the second highest rate of occupancy, with around one-half awaiting trial proceedings.

It is easy to sympathize with the inmates, not only because - according to the inmates themselves - *everyone* is innocent, but because even in the cases where an accused perpetrator did perpetrate the perpetration, the sub-human conditions of the prison make the punishment outweigh the crime. Each inmate is allotted one meal of

couscous and leafy sauce per day, and is forced to rely, when possible, upon family members to bring food, clothing and personal hygiene articles, which are only admitted to the inmates following the paying of a bribe. Malnourishment is a serious problem among inmates, as is the inadequacy of healthcare. Because of the lack of sanitation and close quarters, disease spreads quickly: upon questioning, several inmates reported outbreaks of scabies, tuberculosis and several sexually transmitted diseases. Bringing this to the attention of the prison doctor proved fruitless; he stated that no medicine was available for the inmates, due to withholding of funds by the federal government.

As has been discussed, Anglophone and Francophone areas exist within Cameroon. Due to this fact, two penal codes exist as well; both the common law "Penal Code" (practiced in former British regions) as well as the "Criminal Prosecution Code" (applied in Francophone regions), comprising an at-times confusing, dual legal standard. Legal assistance is technically provided for those unable to afford council, however this does not exist in practice. If you are misfortunate enough to find yourself arrested and charged with a crime, yet unable to pay for a lawyer, you are forced to defend yourself in court. As one would assume, individuals without working knowledge of the legal system make for rather terrible lawyers, which is why those with means pay people who have studied the law to defend them. Another glaring irregularity within Cameroonian law is the ability of certain authorities (governors, prefets, sous-prefets and district chiefs) can legally detain an individual under police custody for up to fifteen days, an action that can then be renewed indefinitely (ACHPR 2002).

Without reform, the Cameroonian prison system will become more and more dilapidated, prisoners will continue to be treated as sub-human, and the government will be faced with two options: either build more prisons or loosen legal statutes. It is unfortunate that the government lacks the will necessary to move toward rehabilitation versus simple incarceration, as the majority those imprisoned in Tibati being between the ages of 18-30, young enough to positively impact their communities, if provided the opportunities. As will be discussed in the following section, the majority of Cameroonians are under the age of 16, a troubling statistic when considering the quality of public education and the availability of employment opportunities. Young, unemployed, undereducated men are a common proponent of civil unrest and, perhaps less dire, violent and non-violent crime.

In terms of ethnocentrism within the prison, I did not encounter any overt cases of tribalism, either through informal conversations or observation, though I imagine that the prisoners were likely segregating themselves according to regional familiarity, which would unconsciously stratify into ethnicity. Prisoners from Ngaoundal (overwhelmingly Baya) would be more likely to associate with one another versus those raised in Tibati (overwhelmingly Fulbe.) The American prison system can be viewed through a much starker ethnocentric lens, simply because the variety of skin pigmentation allows for the appearance of greater segregation; in the Tibati prison, where the population was entirely Cameroonian, the obviousness of segregation is less pronounced.

Bilingual High School

This project began as a straightforward educational campaign when I was approached by Abdoulhai Bobbo, a local small business owner who knew of my work as a health educator. Bobbo had ten high-school aged boys who were interested in becoming peer-educators, and he asked for me to teach course material, lead discussions and facilitate group meetings. My counterpart, Abdoul Sattari, and I eventually shifted the peer-educator program over from this smaller setting to the local bilingual high school, which will be detailed shortly.

Using educational materials provided by Peace Corps, we launched a peer-educators campaign involving high school students throughout Tibati. These students received formalized training on subjects including sexual anatomy, the biology behind the HIV/AIDS virus and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs,) the methods of preventing the transmission of sexual infections (abstinence, fidelity and condoms,) responsible sexual comportment and treatment options. The peer-educators reviewed and discussed various "at-risk" scenarios, which included situations involving drug and alcohol use, prostitution, sexual violence and norms, teen pregnancy and peer pressure. Myths surrounding HIV/AIDS and other STIs were debunked and each peer-educator explained proper prophylaxis use through demonstrations involving an expired condom and an impressively carved wooden penis. After viewing a session, peer-educators would lead the next meeting, teaching the material back to their fellow educators. It was through this process that the group gained public speaking skills, confidence and

experience.

This first effort gradually petered out, as the school year started. Pleased with what we considered to be overall success with this small group, Abdoul and I decided to continue this peer-education project by working with the "Croix Rouge Health Club" at the local bilingual high school. By broadening the scope of the project, we were able to directly educate a greater number of students who, in turn, will use their experiences to educate fellow students, siblings and parents. Working with high school students provided challenges and payoffs, culminating with World AIDS Day, occurring on the first day in December. With our peer-educators we presented condom demonstrations from classroom to classroom, ultimately acquainting several hundred students with proper condom use before day's end.

Although I was not expecting to find examples of ethnocentricity, nowhere during my time working at the Tibati public high school did I notice any existing tribalism; the students treated one another much in the same way as students the world over, the same being said for interactions involving teachers and staff. The absence of ethnocentrism could be a result of the relative effectiveness of the public school, combined with an utter lack of alternative. While I am unaware of exact statistics, the high dropout rate of Cameroonian students is evident, with parents who might otherwise prefer to segregate their students according to ethnicity are unable to do so. What does exist, however, are schools divisible by religion, from primary to high school level. A longitudinal study of the ethnic sentiments of students would be interesting in determining at what age

tribalism begins to emerge in Tibati, if at all.

Project Two: Water Pump Committee

The second of my first two major projects conducted within the first year of service revolved around the formation of a water pump committee, whose task it was to raise public funds for the construction of a new water pump. After conducting needs assessment sessions with local leadership in the Panyere Quarter of Tibati, it was determined that the lack of potable water presented the most pressing concern, and the construction of a new public water pump necessary.

At the onset of this project, one foot-pedal public water pump served the families of around one-hundred homes in the quarter. During peak hours of use, an individual might wait up to one hour to fill a single five-gallon jug with water to be used for cooking, cleaning of the home and clothing, washing and drinking. We were informed by local leaders that the next closest public water source was a public well around one kilometer away from the quarter's center. Another option is the Panyere River, also around one kilometer away, posing the risk of any number of waterborne diseases, as it is used as everything from a car wash, laundromat, public bathtub and latrine. Roaming herds of cattle, goats and sheep also drink, urinate, defecate, bleed and probably die daily in the Panyere. In addition to serious health risks, including the possibility of amoebas, hepatitis, typhoid fever, cholera, giardia, schistosomiasis and dysentery, the amount of time and effort expended by hauling a relatively small amount of water the distance of

one kilometer emphasized the need for more options.

The pump project was decided upon entirely by community leaders following a needs assessment. There were approximately thirty-five members - all men - who participated in this first meeting. The men comprising this group were of varied ethnicity: Mboum, Haoussa, Fulbe and others, signifying an absence of tribalism; these men were willing to work together toward a singular goal that would benefit their community as a whole, the only noticeable discrepancy being the homogeneity of their religion, that is, Muslim. Elections were held during the same session, with positions of president and vice-president, secretary, treasurer, sergeant-at-arms and a host of assistants with slightly differing titles. Unaware of the true costs of constructing a water pump, we estimated a need for 2,000,000 CFA, the equivalent of $4000 USD. It was estimated that a total of 200 families lived in the quarter, with the amount of 500 CFA to be collected each month from each family. 500 CFA is one American dollar, and is the price of one beer or carbonated beverage; this amount was also agreed upon by the group members as a reasonable request. If 100,000 CFA were collected each month, we estimated that along with funding from the Lamido, Mayor or some other political leader or leaders, we would be able to begin construction after six to eight months. All funds would be placed into a bank account at the microcredit institution in Tibati, with the President and Treasurer being the only individuals with access to the funds.

The first tangible step was to promote the project to the residents of the quarter. We wanted to determine the actual number of families in the area, as well as whether the

500 CFA ask per month was realistic. Community canvassers were selected and provided information-gathering survey forms, and were asked to conduct a house by house survey. We estimated that following two weeks of data collection, the canvassers would have sensibilized residents to the proposed project, and determined a factual number of families within the quarter: This is where the project began to break down.

After two weeks had elapsed, we were no closer to determining the number of families within the quarter, nor had any progress on informing the community about the project been made. When asked, the arrival of seasonal rains was given as primary reason for the failure to begin - or for that matter, complete - the data collection process. While the "rainy season" does make outdoor work difficult and unattractive, the rains in Tibati were nothing resembling monsoons; on average, rains arrived every other day, usually in the afternoon and never for more than an hour at any one time. As I have continued my service, it became apparent that rainstorms were used as an excuse by many Tibatians to stay inside and put off obligations, even if the storm had ended an hour before. Tromping through the muddy streets is not fun for anyone, however the frustration felt when realizing that our meeting had been canceled because of a rain shower that ended an hour beforehand was immensely difficult to handle, coming from the faster-paced work environment of the US.

In short, the project steadily declined, until it was eventually abandoned by all parties. In an effort to drum up community support, my counterpart and I scheduled a meeting with the delegate to the department of water and electricity; this was incredibly

unsuccessful, as the first question asked by the delegate was: "And who will be your external funder?" When we attempted to explain that this project would be addressed by the public - a communal solution to a communal problem - we were laughed out of his office. The area within Tibati that was to benefit from this project was never an issue, leading me to believe that the delegate harbored no ill will toward any specific ethnic group.

Effectiveness of Peace Corps Cameroon

With any international development effort, objectively questioning the purpose, effectiveness in assistance deliverance and the sustainability of this assistance is essential in gauging its legitimacy, and Peace Corps Cameroon is no exception. As stated earlier in this paper, Peace Corps Cameroon has operated uninterrupted since 1962, a record for sequential years of service. Development does not, of course, occur overnight; however the American taxpayer would be remiss not to ask about the accomplishments of any development organization that has operated in any country for forty-seven straight years. Two questions overshadowed my service. First: What does Peace Corps Cameroon have to show for its efforts? And secondly: Is our presence accomplishing Peace Corps' stated objectives of providing Cameroonians with technical skills and sharing in meaningful cross-cultural exchange? Only able to account for operational procedures from 2008-2010, this analysis cannot be viewed as an overall assessment of the entirety of our presence in Cameroon, however I believe criticism of both positive and negative aspects

of Peace Corps' approach to assisting in the development of Cameroon is possible, these aspects being systemically perpetuated.

Peace Corps employs a good number of Cameroonian nationals, providing a stable salary, benefits and, in some cases, intellectual workplace satisfaction. These individuals, ranging from drivers and cleaning staff to petty officers and assistant program directors, all have families who are supported economically through our organization, certainly a positive aspect.

For volunteers who make the effort to learn the language, immerse themselves within their surrogate communities, Peace Corps can be an experience of incredible self-development. The overwhelming majority of volunteers are recent college graduates, with a median age of around twenty-four, some of whom are leaving the nest for the first time. Volunteers learn resourcefulness and perseverance, gaining perspective of how the developing world actually exists outside the pages of texts and beyond the walls of classrooms. In turn, Cameroonians have the opportunity to engage Americans, learning more about our culture which is predominately known only through movies and television shows. The cross-cultural exchange shared through Peace Corps' presence is perhaps its strongest, most positive attribute.

Programmatically, the service of a single volunteer has the capacity to educate and ameliorate the lots of scores of Cameroonians, improving understanding of technological and methodological advancements in the areas of public health and agroforestry, as well as new business techniques, all beneficial for any community, when projects are

conducted properly, which is typical. Volunteers receive no budget and must rely upon the good works of Cameroonians and the charity of local politicians to accomplish any project requiring funding; in essence, we are told to "run with the ball" but are given no ball, which limits the scope of what volunteers can conceivably accomplish. Even a small amount of discretionary funds would greatly improve the prospects of a volunteer's service, and while domestic programs such as AmeriCorps similarly withhold individual budgets from its volunteers, comparing development resources - such as photocopiers, computers, access to educational information and private citizens with the time and motivation to assist volunteers - between the two organizations is ludicrous. It is easier to organize and commence projects with nothing in America than in the developing world, because our definition of "nothing" is drastically different from that of the developing world.

While supportive of the public health, agroforestry and small enterprise development programs, I have struggled to understand the legitimacy of the education program, which sends dozens of volunteers to schools throughout Francophone regions with the primary objective of teaching English to high school students for two years. Cameroon is, as has been mentioned, a bilingual country (French and English) equipped with more than enough trained-English teachers to satisfy the needs of its schools. Simply put, the education program takes jobs away from qualified Cameroonian teachers, thrusting predominantly young American men and women - many of whom are without any formal training in education - into classrooms where they are largely unable to

command enough of the students' respect to be effective. The moral and satisfaction of education volunteers is significantly lower than volunteers in any other program, as evidenced by the higher rates of early termination (when a volunteer elects to end service before close of service) witnessed during my service.

Individual motivation plays entirely too large a part of whether a volunteer's service is productive or not. It is asinine to assume that every individual has the skills necessary to be a productive volunteer, just as with any other profession. The same tangible and intangible components that combine to create a successful doctor, airplane technician or state senator determine the success of each volunteer. Some people are cut out for international development, while others are not, a point which would not be problematic if consequences for shoddy work performance existed. Accountability among volunteers is seriously lacking in Peace Corps Cameroon, the responsibility of which can be partly attributed to the diffuseness of the administration, coupled with the difficulties of travel throughout most of the country, as well as a low administrator-to-volunteer ratio (1:25). There are not enough mid-level bureaucrats to ensure productivity; our organization could be compared to an army comprised of nothing but generals and privates, lacking officers with their carrots and sticks.

The feeling of isolation is felt more strongly for volunteers who live in the Grand North, who must endure a fourteen-hour train ride to Yaounde, where Peace Corps Cameroon's headquarters is located. At the time of this writing, Peace Corps Cameroon has been without a Country Director for nearly three months. Peace Corps is

bureaucratic and, like most bureaucracies, it becomes difficult to dislodge an underperforming employee. Though I shudder at the thought of what a privatized development model might resemble, there is little doubt that many volunteers would be rightfully given their walking papers, were our administration not as squeamish about disciplining, suspending or outright terminating certain volunteers who accomplish little to nothing with a bizarre sense of self-righteous pride.

It has become evident that the number of volunteers serving in Cameroon will see a serious influx over the next two years, with some estimating that the total number will more than double, creating a wonderful opportunity with significant challenges. While more volunteers means that our organization will have the capacity to impact a greater number of lives, without an adequate system of quality control these additional men and women run the risk of underutilization. Peace Corps Cameroon has the potential to achieve great things on behalf of the Cameroonian people, however it is presently lacking in the necessary administrative leadership.

Conclusions

Based on the information collected in this study, ethnic groups are still considered important institutions in the village of Tibati - for reasons stemming from dissatisfaction with the Cameroonian government - however there were no observable cases of overt tribalism. If Tibatians are harboring ethnic resentments they are doing so passively or unconsciously. The only ethnic tension witnessed during the 13 months spent gathering

observational data was between two groups of children (one Baya, the other Fulbe) who were between the ages of eight and twelve; these children would taunt and occasionally fight one another, though nothing too violent in nature. One assumes that these perceived differences were cultivated at home, by either parents or elder siblings, as ethnic prejudice does not create itself.

Ethnocentrism does not appear to be the driving factor in identification; however, based on conversations with residents, there is an obvious lack of trust on the part of Tibatians toward the Cameroonian government. Because the government is regarded so poorly, it should not be surprising that the idea of state identification is met with mistrust, a negative relationship that will fester as long as the government continues to ignore the needs and wants of the citizenry. By and large, Cameroonians are not ignorant to what many international aid agencies and transparency organizations already know: the government is at present hopelessly corrupt, and is unlikely to change in the near future. When questioned as to *how* the populous might create formative change within Cameroon, the overwhelming response was that it would be best to wait until Paul Biya is dead. It is a sorry state of affairs when those dissatisfied with the performance of their government have assuaged their fears with the eventual death of their autocratic leader. As Biya's health continues to deteriorate (it is already seen as in decline), the hopes and expectations of the Cameroonian people for the arrival of a new day will intensify. I believe these hopes to be unrealistic; it is in my estimation that the death of Biya - if he has not already privately handpicked his successor - will result in the smooth transition of

power. The RDPC (Biya's ruling party) will find a new leader and retain its stranglehold over the electoral process.

For Cameroon to improve its international status, systemic change from within is critical. The country has many assets; its relatively long history of peacefulness is chief among them. Cameroon is a beacon of stability in the otherwise tumultuous Central African region; this is of overwhelming benefit to the political and economic progress of the country and should be vigorously guarded. International investment - integral to development as it is considered today - will come to those countries with resources and stability, of which Cameroon reigns regionally. However, due to the corruption of the government, Cameroon has not - nor will it ever - reach its potential. Through a specifically targeted social mobilization campaign, it would be possible to bend the government to a position more directly beneficial to the population. Social mobilization can be credited to a host of advancements throughout Cameroon's history, namely the creation of Cameroon as a multiparty state, which came about through organized - and peaceable - political opposition. What Cameroon currently lacks is leadership, which, as exemplified by John Fru-Ndi, the former vegetable salesman who organized the Social Democratic Front party (SDF) and became the greatest challenger to Paul Biya, can come from nearly anywhere.

While issues such as war, famine, human rights abuse, environmental degradation and the spread of HIV/AIDS dominate most conversations about the condition of sub-Sahara Africa, government corruption is attributable to the promulgation of these

problems and is just as important as any on the list above. Corruption is a demoralizing force, eroding citizens' faith in their institutions, creating a climate of malaise and hopelessness. When a people stop believing in their government, the willingness to place faith and to work with political institutions flies out the window. Development work is severely undermined by a corrupt government, as the positive impact of international aid programs is nullified when leaders unabashedly skim off project financing to line their own pockets and those of their allies. When an organization provides funds and expertise for an infrastructural improvement campaign - a road and bridge building project, for example - it creates a contract with the state government, forcing it to promise to allot a certain amount of monies for annual upkeep of the project. The diffuse nature of sub-Saharan bureaucracies allows for mismanagement and "disappearance" of earmarked funds and, as a result, the roads and bridges become neglected and eventually impassable, wasting the time and funds of the development agency and creating a situation where the agency is mistrustful of the government and, as such, unwilling to provide assistance in the future. When roads and bridges are unusable, it is not the government officials who suffer; it is the citizens whose quality of life diminishes.

Without private sector growth a state will never move beyond its present economic status, and the disincentive hurdles erected by many sub-Saharan governments have driven away prospective investment - and therefore job creation - in the country, once again most negatively affecting the citizenry. In an article published by the Wall Street Journal in 2009, Dambisa Moyo, a former economist at Goldman-Sacs, argues that

embezzlement and political corruption are indeed knee-capping the growth of African

states, however the aid itself is also detrimental to the economic vibrancy of a state.

Large injections of foreign aid have effectively created a welfare-continent, where

ingenuity and the entrepreneurial spirit have been replaced by a placid, disinterested

political environment that has become dependent on international assistance to meet and

solve its problems.

According to Transparency International, a corruption watch-dog organization,

24% of people polled in sub-Sahara Africa reported paying a bribe at some point during

2009. Compare this with a mere 2% of those polled in North America. The same study

reported more than 50% of poll respondents living in Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone

and Uganda reported the paying of a bribe in 2009, each of them in sub-Sahara Africa.

When such open, unapologetic corruption becomes normalized in the mindset of

authority figures it permeates into the folds of a country's social fabric, where everyone

is trying to chip away from everyone else. It becomes easy for a policeman or

schoolteacher to justify the asking for a bribe when they have not been paid in months or

sometimes years, due to corruption at an even higher level. The international community

needs to demand greater accountability before providing aid; if not, the cycle of corrupted

leaders and impoverished states will continue.

In terms of Tibatian ethnocentrism in relation to development, I believe there is

much substantive data that could be collected and distilled. The location of the village,

the variety of ethnic groups, the intermeshing of Anglophone and Francophone

Cameroon and its relative isolation makes Tibati an excellent place to conduct social research. I will advance several areas of future research in the following section.

To put a finer point on this conclusion, I believe it is the ineptitude and corrupt nature of the government that has necessitated the reliance upon the ethnic group for both financial and emotional support. The government has created a vacuum of confidence, a role that the ethnic group has filled, though this is not synonymous with the existence of tribalism - at least not in Tibati - and if any sort of segregation does exist in the village it is of a religious nature.

Future Research

Throughout the course of this study numerous areas for continued research came to mind. Cameroon is a fascinating country - especially so for social researchers - and the opportunities are many. Perhaps the next most logical step would be in determining specifically *why* ethnic groups are more deserving of confidence. Are there tangible grievances against the Cameroonian government that are pushing citizens away from trusting their government, or are the reasons more historic in nature? The responses to these questions could assist a government interested in improving its stature in the eyes of its people; however the present administration seems unlikely to implement changes that might improve its popularity.

This report would have been complemented by a study of specific interests of individual ethnic groups, as well as the prevalence of commonality of interest within

specific interest groups. Development organizations would benefit from a quantitative system of determining interest across ethnic lines, which could be easily assessed by a field researcher who knew what questions to ask. Time, funding and energy could be saved if consensus on the importance of specific projects was wrought; I believe downplaying the importance or necessity of ethnic groups is possible when individuals become aware of shared needs and wants.

Perhaps more theoretically, a study of how members of specific ethnic groups define "development" and an examination of the Cameroonian idea of "statehood" along ethnic lines could shine a light on the fractious political reality in the country. It is logical to assume that once the government begins to provide reasons for the people to place their faith within, a dual-pronged approach of revitalizing the infrastructure accompanied with a top-down reclamation of government agencies - stressing transparency and accountability in the Assembly, executive and judicial branches - would begin the slow process of rebuilding trust in government.

A system of ranking individual job performance of appointed and non-appointed political leaders (president, prefet, sous-prefet, mayor, lamido, etc.) could, if published, help the populous put pressure on political appointers - and themselves - to change the individual political actors and perhaps even the responsibilities of these actors. Though this would certainly be resisted by lawmakers - for when in the course of history has an autocracy *willingly* conceded power to the people - some sort of electoral reform is overdue.

Finally, delving into the schism between Christians and Muslims in Tibati might prove out more contentious than that of state versus ethnicity. Looking into the schools, traditional practices and whether political positions are unduly influenced by external religious forces would be useful in understanding how the town operates.

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